

**The Rev. T. Stewart Lucas
Annual Meeting Address
St. Margaret's Church
January 18, 2009**

Today is a great day. Today is a day when we get to celebrate our own accomplishments as a Christian church community. We get to look back over the past year and see what we have done as followers of Jesus. There are gifts we should raise up to the glory of God, and there are disappointments and failures that we offer up as well, realizing that we are dependent on God alone. And then we get to look ahead to the future and see where God is leading us next. As Associate Rector, it is not my job to set the vision for our community, but as a priest it my job to name the gifts for ministry I see in each of us and hopefully help put those gifts to use as we all seek to share the Good News of God in Christ together.

A good place to start my reflection upon the last year is in worship. It is what we do best as a community. It is the heart of our gathering every week and the most important time we spend together. Our worship is powerful and inviting. We are open and inclusive. At St. Margaret's we let everyone use their gifts, young and old alike. It is what I like best about our community. We have strong leadership in each of our worship ministries for which I am very grateful. Worship and liturgy is not something that an ordained person does alone, but rather it is the work of the people, all of the people.

Our worship would be boring if it were not for our strong music program under the leadership of James Fitzpatrick. He has charted another course of an excellent concert series in addition to the wonderful offerings of our choirs and instrumentalists. In our program we highlight a broad diversity of music which is one of the main reasons for the rapid growth of St. Margaret's Church. We owe James our deep gratitude.

After we worship we gather for Christian Formation. Dina did an amazing job of cultivating new leadership for our Christian Formation program with Ernie Tucker's help as chair of that commission. The explosive growth of our Sunday School and youth program demanded that we find more space for those classes. With the hard work of our vestry and the generous bequests of several saints who have gone before us, we were able to purchase two portable classrooms that are now in use every Sunday. That brought about the ability for all of our classes to take place at the same time. In addition, we now have two children's chapel programs running simultaneously at 9am, and exciting and ever changing ministry. We are grateful for the many volunteers that stepped up to the challenge of teaching these new classes and leading these worship services. I think we are already seeing the fruits of that labor.

We have decided not to hire another priest to replace Dina at this time. However, the 2009 budget includes money for a part time Director of Ministries with Children and Youth. You will be hearing more about that exciting development in the coming weeks.

Once we worship together and delve into the word of God together, we can't help but go out into the world as servants. Our Missions Commission under the leadership of George Tolley, chair, and Izzy Winn, Administrator, continue to lead us in our outreach efforts. Our relationship and

commitment to the Lighthouse Shelter is stronger than ever. And last year we were able to give away over \$80,000 in grants to ministries around the world. Our Endowment has funded over \$1 million dollars in grants over the years, and the process is already under way to give more away this year with many new volunteers involved. We especially look forward to the work of the Environmental Missions Initiative in 2009.

Of course the best thing we do together is eat. Many helpers have helped us in our Fellowship gatherings this year including Teresa Todd and Sarah Hyde. We are grateful that Leah Drooff has stepped up to coordinate coffee hour this year, but she needs more help, and we can use more help in planning our special events. The St. Margaret's Guild and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew are always willing to step in and help, and we are grateful for all that you do. Thanks also go to Steven Brennan and the Joust Committee who raised more money than in years past. All due to my willingness to get in that dunking booth I'm sure. It was a wonderful day, really. . .

Pat Hall, our amazing parish nurse, has kept us healthy and free from the flu, for the most part. Along with our our Deacon, Nancy White, Pat is an invaluable pastoral presence and always there to visit and to heal. I am so grateful for their help in my ministry. They are incredible cheerleaders!

Our Buildings and Grounds Commission under the leadership of Phil Graham and our Junior Warden George Saroch have continued their work in keeping our facilities in check. John Purgason, our Property Manager is also doing his part to keep our doors open for our many ministries here to take place. Last month the vestry approved money to replace the sound system in our church. The vestry is also looking into other cosmetic improvements in the church including replacing the carpet and painting. The vestry has already approved money to paint the exterior of the parish hall and refinish the doors.

Our gardens have never looked better thanks to Catherine Waterman and her team. This year we are grateful to the Master Gardeners who planted the new colonial garden out by our front sign. I'm so excited to see it come back into bloom this spring.

And finally to our finances. We are in an amazing position, countering the news I am hearing from many of my colleagues in other churches who are struggling to make ends meet. Times are tight and our budget is thin, but we have an abundance among us. We continue to be able to minister out of that abundance. We ended 2008 in the black, and our Stewardship Commission under the leadership of John Hall, brought in 30 new pledges. We are grateful to you all. Many thanks to our treasurer Gordon Piché and Jim Hall for their leadership.

And even more thanks goes to our Parish Administrator Ruth McDaniel. She has been my guiding strength in this transition. She keeps us calm, cool and collected. She knows more about this parish than all of us combined. She works more than she should and is asked to do more than we compensate her for. But she knows it is her ministry, and she has dedicated her life to it. As part of our 2009 staffing plans, we are moving her into a more administrative role, taking on the financial aspect of managing our operations. She will be entering pledges and taking care of our deposits and the database. She is excited and energized by her new duties, and we are grateful. To pick up some of the slack of what she used to do, the 2009 budget will allow us to hire

another administrative assistant part-time. We are in the process of finding that person who is right for the job, hopefully to be hired in the next month.

And now to the future. We are in good hands. Your vestry is under the great leadership of Bud Billups as Senior Warden and George Saroch as Junior Warden. I'm delighted they will both continue for another year. The vestry has really taken on the mantle of charting the course for the future of St. Margaret's Church. They are making difficult decisions and continuing the dialogue about how we manage the growth we are experiencing it. Trust me, this vestry operates differently than any other I have seen. They have fun, and they love each other, and that goes a long way.

But none of us can do this alone. Yes, in this interim time, before our Interim Rector Lori Lowe arrives, I have had more on my plate. But it has been an easy burden, because you have shared it with me. You have been willing to help in so many ways. Working and ministering here among you continues to be a joy and a privilege for which I am very grateful.

But our work is not complete. We are being called forward through the ages. We each have gifts for ministry, and right now, more than ever, we need you to use them here at St. Margaret's. And so I asked Dibble Hammar to put together the gifts inventory that you see on your tables. I want us to take a few minutes now so that you can fill those out. Maybe you have always wanted to get involved and never knew how. Maybe you're ready to let go of one ministry and join another. This is your chance. Just check those boxes, and we'll make the connections to the right leader for you. Then we'll get back to you very soon.

This interim time is not a time to sit back and relax. Rather it is a time to get busy and rev up our involvement. You will not see a vast expanse of new programs and meetings. That's not what I'm talking about. But this is a time to reflect on what we are doing and get more people involved. This is a time to continue to communicate with one another and be in relationship with each other. I'd love to see more fellowship opportunities for us to just be together. This is also a time for hands on outreach. Let's get busy in our community and help those in greatest need.

And finally, let's keep growing in faith, in worship, and in numbers. Let's invite our friends and bring our neighbors to music concert and worship. Continue telling our story to everyone you encounter and let's continue to move forward through the ages in a long unbroken line inviting the masses to Come and See.