

# Rector's Report to Vestry

## Submitted for the April 18, 2023 Meeting

### Campus Development

- Northwest Housing Alternatives is feeling encouraged with a new Governor in Tina Kotek and new energy in the Portland's Mayor's office. In particular, they are hopeful that government will help us to navigate or overcome the tiresome process that we call the Street Vacation. (Months in, we have approval from a single neighbor: the Homeowner's Association at what I call the US Bank Building across the street.)

There was an [article in The Atlantic](#) recently that argued that blue states put up particularly robust barriers to creating affordable housing. See in particular:

*...liberalism is largely to blame for the homelessness crisis: A contradiction at the core of liberal ideology has precluded Democratic politicians, who run most of the cities where homelessness is most acute, from addressing the issue. Liberals have stated preferences that housing should be affordable, particularly for marginalized groups that have historically been shunted to the peripheries of the housing market. But local politicians seeking to protect the interests of incumbent homeowners spawned a web of regulations, laws, and norms that has made blocking the development of new housing pitifully simple.*

*This contradiction drives the ever more visible crisis. As the historian Jacob Anbinder has explained, in the '70s and '80s conservationists, architectural preservationists, homeowner groups, and left-wing organizations formed a loose coalition in opposition to development. Throughout this period, Anbinder writes, 'the implementation of height limits, density restrictions, design review boards, mandatory community input, and other veto points in the development process' made it much harder to build housing. This coalition—whose central purpose is opposition to neighborhood change and the protection of home values—now dominates politics in high-growth areas across the country, and has made it easy for even small groups of objectors to prevent housing from being built. The result? The U.S. is now millions of homes short of what its population needs.*

The Street Vacation process is an excellent example of this phenomenon. When my neighbor wanted to start up an AirBNB she sent me a letter. It contained the instruction that, if I objected to the AirBNB, I could contact the city. If you wish to object to Grace's Street Vacation, by contrast (and if you wish, in turn, to impede our affordable housing efforts) what you must do is *nothing*. This is a system that rewards apathy. I am heartened to think that the state and city may be taking steps to address that.

- The chapel renovations are almost finished! As I shared in Grace Notes, this is an excellent project – and ultimately an affordable one – at so many levels. To the three reasons that I gave in Grace Notes for this project’s importance (1. We need and will use the improved space. 2. Getting a project done is a source of energy. 3. Creating beauty is a holy activity.) I will add the fourth reason: this project is evidence that our community is not stuck. So many parishes would be paralyzed by anxiety and reactivity at the prospect of change and, in particular, at the prospect of changing a liturgical space. We aren’t such a community. This project is evidence of flexibility, curiosity, and trust. That is something to be celebrated.

### **General Administration**

- Anson Carter, our brand new bookkeeper and parish assistant, is proving to be wonderful so far. Anson is already hard at work on improving our systems. Thank you to the recruiting team and, in particular, to Curt for sending Anson our way.
- Kevin and I are in deep and active conversation about how best to support our Parish Manager, Kris Doty, while also meeting the parish’s needs. Best HR practice requires me to not say too much more in this report except to emphasize that our goal is to balance our duty as fiduciaries to the parish with our promises in the Baptismal Covenant.
- Thank you to everyone who has stepped up to keep the office running during Kris’ crisis. And thank you for the many ways that you have been kind to Kris and Matt. It is so moving to see so many people being church.

### **Liturgical/Pastoral Stuff**

- I am pleased to report that recruiting for Altar Guild has good momentum, with several new leaders in place. Thank you to everyone who has said *yes* to this important ministry.
- Thank you to everyone who made Matthew David’s farewell such a wonderful occasion. I’m grateful.
- Gosh, the Holy Week and Easter were a gift. As I said in Grace Notes, this is a three-steps-forward, two-steps-back kind of moment. In a moment like this I will celebrate bright spots when they come. The Triduum could not have gone better. Several newcomers appear to be finding a home at Grace. And Easter saw the most number of folks in church that we have seen since Christmas 2019. There will be other challenges to come. But for now: Go us!
- We anticipate relaunching Church School on May 14th. The nursery is once again staffed. The coloring books and Lego table are a grand success. Children and Youth Ministry has some exciting momentum!

- It is not too late to sign up for the [All Parish Retreat](#). I would love to share the time with you.
- I was reflecting recently that the past several months have seen (or will shortly see) 1. The unplanned departure of two clergy people; 2. The end of Jackie Thomas' time at Grace; 3. An enormously promising Building Steward who quit in his first month; 4. My parent's health crises and similar crises for Liz and Sharon; 5. Kris and Matt's crisis; 6. Multiple grief-filled pastoral matters; all of which came during 7. The ongoing challenge of finding our way to a "new normal."

And yet, within all of that, dare I say that Grace Memorial is thriving. Thank you all for your good work in making this possible. And thank you God for sticking with us through it all. You have brought us a mighty long way.

### **Representing Grace in the Community**

- The PHAME Gala was wonderful. This year, for the first time, it was at Alberta Rose Theater. A much more folksy and fitting (and less loud) venue than a downtown hotel.

### **Continuing Education**

- During this meeting I will be a retreat for College for Congregational Development outside of Chicago. We are working on renewing the CCD curriculum. I have crossed fingers that the internet will let me join you!