

# Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Chapel Hill, NC

## 2022 Sr. Warden's Report

Annual meeting 29 January 2023

Prepared by Donya Rose

How would you characterize 2022 for our church? I'd say it's been a year of settling in – settling in to our methods and processes for living with Covid, settling in to our relationship with our Vicar, Marion, settling in to our new software and bookkeeper for managing our finances, settling in to a world in which we can lift our eyes from our near-exclusive COVID vigilance from time to time and once again see all the need, all the opportunity, all the ways we are called to make a difference to each other, to our neighbors, and to our wider world.

During 2022 **we continued** our important outreach supporting the Interfaith Council (IFC) and Rogers Road community with food donations. We once again distributed 10% of our pledge and plate offering to organizations in our community, a truly unique Advocate practice that we have cherished for years.

2022 saw a lot of changes in our activities and offerings, many of which were **welcome returns to our pre-pandemic practices**, including:

- Christian Education for children, now with two different groups for older and younger children
- In-person and online Contemplative Retreats
- Our Sunday lunch together
- Critical Conversations, a discussion in the time before the 10:30 liturgy
- The Readers' Roundtable book discussion group in -person
- The use of Acolytes during our worship
- House dinners weekly.

We have also done some things that are **truly new** for us:

- Enjoying a Celebration of New Ministry to mark the coming together of the People of the Advocate with our Vicar, Marion
- Forming a Finance Committee to share the responsibility of ensuring we remain financially healthy
- Offering a Healing Prayer ministry following the Eucharist at the 10:30 service
- Formally beginning the process of exploring the possibility of moving from Mission to Parish status, more on this in Marion's Vicar's report.

We have re-started a more complete offering for **Christian formation**, which now includes:

- Sacred Ground groups which work with a series of films and readings to support participants' move towards racial healing by "peeling away the layers that have contributed to the challenges and divides of the present day"
- Weekly Bible study online.

In addition, we have continued nightly Compline online and weekly Contemplative Prayer, both in-person and online.

**Our building and grounds** remain one of our greatest assets, and we're delighted that they are in use by others including musicians, CSA food distribution, and even a parishioner who is renting an office in the house.

**Maintaining our buildings and grounds** will always be a key focus for us as stewards of this beautiful spot. Several items required our focus in 2022, most visibly the pond. Our pond had to be inspected as part of the permitting process for the Fold and Field, and we found that it was out of compliance in several ways, all of which had to be addressed: trees and plants had grown in places that threatened the integrity of the dam, the water level was about a foot higher than it should have been, and there was a clog in the pond's drainage system. All of this has been addressed with the help of

# Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Chapel Hill, NC

## 2022 Sr. Warden's Report

Annual meeting 29 January 2023

Prepared by Donya Rose

professional pond maintenance folks, and will be maintained by them going forward to ensure we remain in compliance with a healthy sustainable pond.

**Our financial health** remains strong with no debt, and a reasonable amount of "savings" in the form of our Capital Fund in case of unforeseen challenges. But it should also be noted that we were able to balance the 2023 budget only with a very frugal orientation. There are so many things we would love to be able to do in terms of programs for our people, outreach for our community, and support for a more reasonable workload for our Vicar, and we are not able to fund these out of the expected receipts from our various sources of income. Over 95% of our income for 2023 is expected to come from donations, with a bit from rental fees for the use of our space, and bit of money left from the forgiven PPP loan we received a while back. Nancy will share the details of the 2023 budget with you. But I wanted to make sure we are all aware that when we step back and view the big picture of our finances, two things stand out: (1) we are healthy and not in any jeopardy, and (2) that is only because we do so much of what we do on a shoestring, with little flexibility to support the many great ideas and suggestions that are brought forward. We know our People to be committed and generous with their time and with their resources, and for that your Vestry is deeply grateful. But it's important for you to know that if we had a few more thousand dollars there's so much we could do with it. We could do a better job of keeping our beautiful old church building in good repair, update and rethink our now-aging worship binders, pay for an independent auditor, hire a part-time administrative resource so our Vicar could spend more time on community engagement which would help to more deeply connect our efforts to those of other churches and organizations in our community. We can and we will grow and become a brighter light in our community, but how well and how quickly we do that will depend on the energy and commitment of all of us, both in terms of our time and effort and of our financial support.

**The Fold and the Field project** has been under construction now for far longer than originally expected. When we raised money for this project back in early 2021 it was with the hope that it would be completed by that Fall. As a reminder, the project has two parts. One part is the Fold, which will be an outdoor gathering place, a partially covered platform, with a brick oven suitable for baking bread or pizza in volume. The other part, the Field, is a parking area to accommodate overflow parking so that we can continue to welcome people to our events and services, even if they choose to arrive by car. Both are squarely aimed at hospitality, but in different ways. The Fold will allow us to have a gathering place to build community and enjoy time together, bake bread and pizza for ourselves and our guests and neighbors, and even possibly extend our baking to a broader bread oven ministry as practiced by several churches with similar ovens in Minnesota, and a few closer to home. More on that exciting possibility in the coming months. For now let's focus on the building project.

Both the Fold and the Field ran into unexpected challenges early on. For the Fold we had many of the same challenges faced by others in 2021, challenges with supply chain issues slowing delivery of our needed construction materials, and challenges with tradespeople who were overwhelmed with demand for their special skills. Nonetheless, a team of People of the Advocate, supported by our construction partner, Szostak Design, soldiered on and are nearing completion of the construction as of this writing. Critical to that effort were a few key people who have put in many many hours to help make this possible. While there have been a few others who did some work at a few work sessions, the majority of the work from the People of the Advocate was completed by Ames Herbert, his brother Joe Herbert, Tom Williams, and Nate Bradford, all under Nate's leadership. We all owe them a debt of gratitude for sharing their considerable skills and hard work to help make the Fold possible. If you look outside today, you'll see that much of the construction is nearing completion, but you'll also notice that all there is in the way of an oven is a flat cement slab at the back of the structure.

# Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Chapel Hill, NC

## 2022 Sr. Warden's Report

Annual meeting 29 January 2023

Prepared by Donya Rose

The oven will be constructed in the coming months, again with hands-on work from a small group of People of the Advocate, and a bit of additional help from paid experts in oven building and masonry. An oven similar to ours will be built in less than 10 days as part of a mission trip to Costa Rica in late February, and a few Advocates, Celisa Steele, her daughter Selah, and Don Rose, will participate. They expect to return to us experienced in oven building and ready to lead our efforts in the hope of having our oven operational before summer.

The challenges with the Field part of the project were primarily about compliance with the regulations of the City of Chapel Hill. There were numerous forms to file and reports to complete, and the pond inspection was part of this. This all took far more time and more iterations than any of us expected, and has meant that we have only recently received our permit to begin. The Vestry has chosen to prioritize the completion of the Fold at this point, and will turn attention to the Field once the Fold is complete.

As you may expect, these delays and adjustments have meant that the project has cost more than originally anticipated, in spite of significant volunteer time donated to the completion of the Fold. As of this moment our best guess is that we will need \$10,000 - \$20,000 more than the original budget. Your Vestry will have to decide how best to fund this, whether through additional fund raising or the use of some of our designated funds, or a combination. But before that can be addressed, a full re-estimation of the cost to complete the Field will be necessary. Stay tuned for more news on this as it becomes clear.

Meanwhile, Ames Herbert has graciously agreed to be the Project Manager for the Fold, and is doing a great job of staying abreast of all the work that is ongoing and still needed to finish that part of the work. Be sure to offer your thanks to Nate and Ames, as well as Tom, and Joe.

It's always dangerous to start **thanking people** individually, but I'm going to step further into the danger to thank two more people whose contributions and work for our church are likely greater than is widely appreciated:

- Grace Camblos served as our Tech Steward, guiding us in our use of technology to extend worship beyond the walls of the Chapel. She researched what others were doing, tried out different equipment and configurations, and devised systems, processes and documents to make it go well for all involved. Her insights were even recognized in an article published in our Diocesan magazine as a way of sharing her insights among many churches. We are thrilled that she has been hired into a full-time position leading Communications for St. Phillips in Durham, and wish her well in that job. And we are equally thrilled that she still plans to call our church home and will be among us still.
- Ernie Bowen often seems like the silent glue that holds us together in places we didn't know might come apart. He is the one who makes sure our Sunday lunch is set up and ready when we walk out of the Chapel. He cares for our AdvoCat, Whitby, with daily visits. In the time he spends daily in the Advocate House as Whitby's Warden, he also is often the one who is present when people arrive to repair something, estimate something, or even express a need that our church can help to meet. I am aware that he took it upon himself to thoroughly clean the old wood stove we use for a credence table, but I'm also aware that there are many, many more ways he has helped us out that go unnoticed. He defines the quiet unsung hero who just does what needs to be done for the pleasure of keeping order and knowing he's made a difference.

Finally, I want to thank you, the People of The Advocate, and tell you what an honor it is to be part of this earnest, hardworking, loving community. The Spirit is truly at work among us, visible to us and through us to the world around us.

# Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Chapel Hill, NC

## 2022 Sr. Warden's Report

Annual meeting 29 January 2023

Prepared by Donya Rose

Our work matters. Your participation makes a difference. It has been an honor to serve as you Sr. Warden, working with you to "become what we receive" in the Eucharist.