

PALMER MEMORIAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

JANUARY 29, 2017

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Report of the Senior Warden

Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church

2017 Annual Meeting

The Vestry began the year considering what vulnerabilities existed and how they could be addressed. We worked to shore up the church's health, infrastructure relating to personnel (necessitated by three retirements) and finances. In April, the Vestry brought back to campus Eric Law to lead over 130 members further forward in being a relational church, recognizing both our past patterns and our future desires. In May, the finance committee effort, led by Bet Hunter and Jim Mercurio, refinanced the church's loan with Texas Gulf Bank and negotiated a lower rate and a longer term giving us considerable savings. The personnel committee, led by Greg Hambrick and assisted by Laurel Rutledge, led the hiring effort for a new finance manager and a new business administrator. The new hire opportunities allowed for some adjustments and rearrangements of responsibilities to bring about greater clarity in operations. During the summer, the Vestry hosted both a parish potluck and a newcomer dinner off-campus and helped celebrate the retirements of Tom Matchett, Steve Patterson and the Rev'd Dub Brooks, all of which were enjoyable opportunities for fellowship. At the end of summer, Father Willard called the Rev'd Liz Parker to complete the clergy team. In September at the Vestry panel discussion and in November at the Stewardship forum, the Vestry made the parish aware of some existing vulnerabilities: a facility need to replace the HVAC chillers (different than the HVAC duct work that was completed in 2010 in the Nave) and the church's declining cash balance and pledging units. In response to these vulnerabilities, the Endowment has agreed to pay for the replacement of the chillers in late 2017 and offered the church a loan to provide more cash cushion as we work to build a stronger pledging base. In October, the Vestry hosted one of the most enjoyable Covenant Sunday celebrations to date, with live music and a cookout on the lawn as a witness to world that great things go on at our church.

Eric Law taught us that to be a sustainable church is to strike a balance between ministries to (leadership structure), ministries in (congregational community) and ministries of the church, "that which the church does to manifest Christ to the world through serving the needy, proclaiming hope, working for peace and justice and healing the sick in the larger community and the world." Over the course of the year, I experienced a renewed sense of community forming slowly and surely around children, youth and young families (in), the renewal of the staff (to) and the parish's excitement for more outreach and peace building (of), as seen in the numbers serving together as a parish on Serve Sundays and studying and traveling in the Holy Land. Small steps in building relationships with people outside of the church happened as well with hosting Elite Academy Summer Camp for children during summer, American Guild of Organists convention, PDAP Recovery Reunion, a showing of Generation Found documentary highlighting Archway Academy, Ash Wednesday's Ashes to Go, holding a parish pool party in West University Place and with guest speakers on the Rector's forum, bringing us community perspectives on topics relevant to Christians. Making known that our church exists to serve and bless others can only serve to revitalize us as a sustainable church.

Week in and week out, Palmer liturgy and music provide the ballast we have come to depend on while quietly and pastorally the medical center, refugee and Palmer Place apartment ministries work to create home for those far from their own. And when one who travelled here didn't make it home again, Palmer grieved alongside their family. Our thanks to so many capable and compassionate lay leaders and Ken Cowan, the Rev'd Alex Easley, Roger Hutchison, Brady Knapp, the Rev'd Liz Parker, the Rev'd Linda Shelton, and Yuri McCoy (who left in August) for their leadership in making worship, outreach, parish life and pastoral care possible.

We are grateful to Abigail Butler, Pam Harvey, Stuart Kensinger, Kirk Waldron and George Webb for four years of service on the Vestry. I am personally grateful for the support of Jim Mercurio as junior warden this year, whose seasoned responses and good humor were invaluable. I give thanks for the hard work of the Palmer office staff Jessica, Tara, Dustin, Sue, Gerry, Jimmy, Israel, Daisy and Benita who continually supported me and our vestry efforts. Father Willard's calm, humble and joyful temperament, his gifts of intellectual vigor and good judgement and his formation of a strong clergy and staff team are all blessings that will pay great dividends to our parish.

I recently told my oldest son the story of Daphne Palmer Neville and Edward Albert Palmer, how we, as a church, carry on the life of one whom we didn't know, by being a church of blessing and service to others. It has been my honor to serve as senior warden. I pray that our work has been a tribute to a place we each hold dear and to a God that delights even in us and that going forward, we will relish the life of this parish by feeding it with our resource and sharing the love that we receive here with the world around us.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Daniell-Knapp, senior warden

Ministry Reports

Alternative Gift Market

This year the Advent Gift Market was re-named to the Alternative Gift Market to better represent the ministry to those who have not participated before. The Alternative Gift Market offers an alternative option to buy Christmas gifts for friends and family by supporting Palmer's outreach ministries.

The 2016 Alternative Gift Market was held during the 4 Sundays in Advent. Donations were also received online via Palmer's eGiving option as well as donations sent to the church office. This year we added a new ministry - the Costa Rica Mission.

A total of \$10,829 was raised for the following ministries: Archway Academy, Emergency Aid Coalition, Kairos, Palmer Place, Refugee Resettlement, Star of Hope, Yellowstone Academy, and the Costa Rica Mission.

Ansley Browns and Bobbie Wallingford, co-chairs

Angel Tree

Angel Tree is a division of Prison Ministries and provides Christmas gifts to children whose parent is incarcerated, on behalf of that parent. In 2016 Palmer Church requested 50 children but again, because Harris County Jail did not participate, we received only 28 names. Palmer parishioners enthusiastically volunteered with this ministry and we were able to adopt and deliver gifts to 26 children in the homes of 9 caregivers. Because all Angel Tree gift tags were taken in less than one hour, we then shifted our efforts two additional Sundays to support the Child Protective Services First Night Kits. Many contributions were collected to fill back packs and duffle bags and delivered to CPS.

Johnna Kincaid

Archway Academy

Archway Academy had a very eventful year in 2016. In its 13th year of operation, Archway remained the largest sober high school in America, providing our students in recovery an education and a community to help them maintain their sobriety. During the 2015-2016 school year, Archway served 138 students achieving a 72% sobriety rate. The school year culminated on Thursday, May 26th with the graduation of 24 seniors in recovery. Of the 24 graduates in the class of 2016, 23 are attending college and one joined the military. Also of note in 2016 was the premier of the independent film Generation Found. The largest part of this film, about youth substance abuse recovery, was filmed at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church and focused on Archway Academy. Since the public release in September, Generation Found has been seen by over 15,000 people in 4 different countries. We are very proud to be a national advocacy leader through this groundbreaking film. The 2016-2017 school year began with the 2nd largest enrollment of students seeking sobriety in Archway's history. The 14th school year will be another active year for Archway and with the help of supporters such as Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church, we look to continue to provide our students with an education and give them hope for a future.

Sasha Mclean

Baptism Ministry

The Baptism ministry underwent some transition in 2016 with the prevalence of private baptisms to strictly public baptisms during a service in the Nave. I worked in tandem with the publications department on certificates; Daughters of the King, who wrote letters to the families; the banner team, who made each baptism candidate a personalized banner to keep; and with the Altar Guild to communicate when to set up the baptism font and candles. Each family of the baptism candidate met with me and a priest to guide in logistics of the baptism

service, and to explain the commitment they were making to the candidate. In the future, we will limit the baptisms to 4 services a year: the baptism of Jesus in January, the Saturday Easter Vigil, Pentecost, and All Saint's Sunday. We would like to create baptism workshops that are done twice a year for new families around a meal time. Most of these families are new to Palmer, so this would double as baptism formation and hospitality.

Catherine Beebe

Change Ringers of Palmer

We are ringing every weekend for call to service. We have rung for more weddings this year than any previous. We rang for Christmas Eve Service, Christmas day and New Year's Day. We have rung occasionally before the 9 am service.

Our recruitment efforts have netted five new students (currently all being trained by the Ringing Master). By standards of other towers, this is good.

Our band of service ringers is up to 13 now, but we usually have five or six on a Sunday. On our entire ringing list, we have 12 parishioners and 10 non parishioners.

We had one maintenance day in 2016.

For 2017, we hope to continue the growth and improvement of our skills.

For 2017, we hope to increase the number of times we ring for the 9 am service, with an eye toward ringing the parishioners in regularly. We would like to recruit ringers who attend the 9 am service.

Allen Nunley, Ringing Master

Christian Formation

Christian Formation is the lifelong process of growing in our relationship with God, self, others, and all creation. Every experience in our lives can provide us with the opportunity to express our faith; the challenge we face is recognizing these opportunities and learning ways to live a sometimes-countercultural life in a secular world.

We are each on a journey of faith that requires nourishment and at Palmer we find that in community, in fellowship, and in education opportunities. By focusing on our relationship with God and one another we are in a constant process of transformation that lasts our entire lives. Join us and deepen your faith, relationships, and commitment to God.

Over the past year, a variety of formational opportunities for adults took place during the 10:00 hour on Sunday mornings. These included the Rector's Forum, Parents of Young Children, A Class for Young Adults, A class using Social Media to explore the Gospel, and a Bible Class.

Great Wednesdays featured a wide offering of classes:

- Pilgrim
- Blessed Are the Peacemakers
- Women in Early Christianity
- Palmer Writing
- Standing on Holy Ground – Art, Faith, and Mystery

Christian Formation Classes for Children and Youth also take place during the 10:00 hour on Sunday mornings. We follow Weaving God's Promises--a comprehensive, three-year Christian education curriculum developed and written exclusively for the Episcopal Church.

Children are invited to participate in Liturgy Preparation. "Liturgy Prep" takes place for a brief time during both the 9:00 and 11:00 services. Children are invited to follow the children's cross to St. Bede's Chapel where they pray, sing, and explore the Gospel together. The children return to their families during the Peace. We began the year with around 8-10 children in attendance. We now average 35-50 children each week.

Some other highlights:

- The Very Big Story – Palmer VBS for children and adults
- Parish-wide Pool Party
- Relocation and enhancement of Parish Library
- Easter Gardens on Holy Saturday
- Combined Sunday School on special occasions
- Parish Retreat at Camp Allen
- Epiphany Pageant during the 9:00 AM worship service

Youth Ministry at Palmer

Youth Ministry at Palmer calls for passion, patience, and faithfulness – pointing out the sacred in the midst of the chaos of adolescence and walking faithfully with young people as they transition from child to young adult. Youth Ministry at Palmer is a bridging ministry of education, connection, formation, and hopefully, transformation.

Responding to the spiritual needs of teens is about building trusting relationships. Palmer strives to walk with young people on their journeys from childhood to adulthood, recognizing their gifts for ministry, their questions about spirituality, and their desire to make a difference in the world.

The Youth Council at Palmer, formed in 2016, is a body of youth and adults (who work with youth) lead Palmer's ministry to youth collaboratively guided by the parish vision for formation. Roger Hutchison, Palmer's Director of Christian Formation and Parish Life, provides oversight to the Youth Council. Palmer's Curate, The Rev'd Alex Easley, provides clergy support and guidance. Megan Henry serves as Chair of the Youth Council. Youth from each grade level serve as leaders on the council along with adult leaders in communications, special events, worship and outreach. 2016 was a fruitful year of sharing the Good News with Palmer youth!

Highlights:

- Parish Pool Party
- Speedy's Fast Track
- Monthly Youth Brunch
- Episcopal Night at the Dynamos
- Blessing of the Animals
- College Student Care Packages
- Serve Sunday
- Christmas Party
- Confirmation Class for Youth

Confirmation For Youth

Confirmation is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength for the Holy Spirit through prayer and laying on of hands by the bishop. (BCP 860)

All high school youth interested in being confirmed in the Episcopal Church are invited to join The Rev. Liz Parker on Sunday mornings at 10:00AM in Holy Cross for Pilgrim. Pilgrim is an innovative and inspiring program that approaches the great issues of faith not through persuasion but by participation in a pattern of contemplation and discussion with others. This offering is open to all high school youth. It is designed to prepare participants for confirmation, but a commitment to be confirmed isn't a prerequisite.

Roger Hutchison

Daughters of the King

Our Palmer Chapter of the Order of the Daughters of the King is a member of an international group of Daughters that began in New York in 1885. Daughters take a vow that incorporates prayer and service, and we maintain a Prayer List, praying daily for our parish and prayer requests. Monthly meetings, usually on the third Saturday of the month, provide fellowship and study. In 2016 we heard from the Rev. Liz Parker, had a program on the Woman Within, decorated our Christmas tree for the parish, and explored the Annunciation. In 2017 we learned about Writing a Rule of Life, will study *The Alsolife* by the Rev. Barbara Crafton, and will have a Quiet Day at

the Villa de Matel. Officers through August 2016 were President-Phyllis Svrcek, Vice President-Sue Hamblen, and Secretary-Barbara Hass. Officers from September 2016 through August 2017 are President-Betty Key, Vice President-Arlene Price, and Secretary-Suzanne Miller. We welcome interested women.

Betty Wilson Key

Dinner and Discussion Group

In 2016 there were nine Dinner and Discussion gatherings in addition to a planning meeting in mid-August. The meetings took place on the second Fridays of January, February, March, April, May, September, October, November, and December from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. in participants' homes. Dinners were made up of salads, main dishes, and desserts brought by those who came. Our topics ranged from hearing how Roger Hutchison has come to his new work at Palmer, to an update on Houston's efforts to house the homeless, to the mental health field of Positive Psychology, to reflections on the 2016 Presidential election. The eclectic nature of topics is the result of the planning meeting, at which, after brainstorming for ideas, those present vote on what would be of greatest interest to them. Also at this meeting participants volunteer to host the monthly gatherings. Information about all activities is distributed from the Palmer office to an email list, as well as by notices in the Palmer, the weekly email newsletter, and the Sunday bulletin insert. Attendance averages around thirty each evening.

Mary Tobin

Downtown Lunch Group

The Palmer Downtown Lunch is an informal gathering at noon the fourth Tuesday of each month (except December) Every month, Palmers who live, work, or otherwise find themselves in downtown Houston gather at the Cloister Restaurant inside Christ Church Cathedral for fellowship and good food. On average, we have about two full tables of Palmers and their guests. Our group is normally joined by Father Willard, Alex Easley and Roger Hutchison. The dates for the lunch in 2017 are: 1/24, 2/28, 3/28, 4/25, 5/23, 6/27, 7/25, 8/22, 9/26, 10/24, and 11/28. All are welcome, and we'd love to see you there!

Tom Van Arsdel

Emergency Aid Coalition (EAC)

The EAC and Palmer continue their long history of partnership in assisting, clothing, and feeding Houston's homeless and working poor (more than a quarter century). As a member congregation, Palmer has contributed clothing, food pantry items, back-to-school program support, funds, congregant donations and volunteers.

Palmer is one of fifteen member congregations collectively participating in a united effort to feed, clothe and minister to the homeless, the newly housed and working poor and families in need. Palmer's involvement this past year included:

- New this year, Palmer including the Emergency Aid Coalition in "Serve Sunday," with two stations was a great success. Congregation members have helped bag several 30 lb. sacks of dry beans and rice into individual portions.
- EAC's inclusion in the Advent Gift Market/Alternate Giving Market remains strong.
- Palmer has donated more than 300, standard grocery-sized sacks of clothing to the EAC!

2016 Emergency Aid Coalition Statistics:

- New this year, "Boots to Work," a program providing work-appropriate (and required for employment) boots to those needing them to accept or keep their job, the EAC has assisted 763 individuals with this program.
- Served 5,173 adults and 1,899 children in the clothing center. The total number of clothing items distributed was 88,492. Of this, 14,632 items were new underwear and socks.
- EAC and volunteers run a food pantry at the Houston Food Bank, assisting 23,121 families 2016.

- Provided 77,150 sack lunches to clients.
- Provided 763 students with new backpacks, uniforms/vouchers and grade-appropriate school supplies (from school district back-to-school listings).

Mary Bradshaw and Tim Raymond - Palmer's representatives on the EAC Board

Endowment Fund

The trustees of the Palmer Endowment Fund for the year 2016 were Jere Ahrens, Chair, Bob Ittner, Treasurer, Martha Bersch, Secretary and Dawn Hawley. Linda Kelly serves as Counsel.

On January 1, 2016, the value of the Endowment assets was \$2,258,400. The major distribution of funds during the year was \$105,000 representing funds given to the Church for maintenance and repairs. The fund received \$13,000 in contributions for the year. As of December 31, 2016, the value of the Endowment assets was \$2,333,982. The Endowment's assets are professionally managed by Vanguard Assets Management Services within the investment policies set by the trustees.

The Daphne Palmer Neville Society continued to add new members in 2016, bringing the total membership to 70. The membership consists of those individuals or families who have contributed to the Endowment or have made arrangements in their wills or retirement accounts.

There was no other activity of the Endowment. We will continue to look for opportunities to build Palmer's Endowment and the Daphne Palmer Neville Society.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jere M. Ahrens, Chair*

Evangelism

A new Evangelism Council was formed in the Fall with Kamron Massumi as head and the Rev. Liz Parker as clergy with oversight. In the space of a few months, the Council has created or re-created several initiatives to better welcome newcomers to Palmer:

Worship Bags for Kids - offer a special welcome and means of engagement to young children, and hopefully supports their parents as well. After all, children are not only the future of the church, they are part of the church now, just as they are.

I'm New Here – updated 'connections' cards, provided to help newcomers know how they can get connected at Palmer.

First Sunday – this is a class that will meet the First Sunday of every month. It is an informal opportunity for newcomers to ask questions and learn about the Christian faith, the Episcopal Church and Palmer in particular. The Evangelism Council, which is a diverse representation of the Parish, hosts in rotation.

The Rector's Reception – On the Third Sunday of every month the Evangelism Council hosts this reception in place of the Rector's Forum. This is a time to welcome newcomers with coffee, food and conversation.

Now that we have some welcome structures in place, it's time to focus on how we, as people of faith, are inviting others to join us on this pilgrimage.

Kamron Massumi and The Rev'd Liz Parker

Great Wednesdays

Since the earliest days, Christians have celebrated Jesus through the sharing of worship, ideas and food. Our Great Wednesdays continue in that tradition of nourishing body, mind and spirit.

HEALING SERVICE - 6:00–6:30 pm in St. Bede's Chapel

GREAT WEDNESDAY DINNER - 5:30–7:00 pm in The Parish Hall

FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES - 7:00-8:00 - Various Locations

After many years of generous and dedicated service, the St. Andrew's Guild announced in October 2016 that they could no longer provide meals to the Palmer community on Great Wednesday nights. We are moving forward with exploring different ways of providing the meal - and looking at how we can continue to grow and sustain this important time of fellowship for our congregation. Different Palmer and Community Groups will continue to serve the meals. We are also grateful for the cashier teams who after many years of service are moving on to other opportunities.

Consider Great Wednesday to be a midweek spiritual break, a mini-Sabbath. Give yourself, your friends, and family this gift of time. Put it on your weekly schedule. Come for the intimate service, a delicious meal, and the opportunity to learn something new. On Wednesday nights, join us for worship, dinner, and conversation.

Roger Hutchison

Holy Spokes

Founded in 2005, the Holy Spokes are Palmer's friendly and welcoming cycling group. These men and women of all ages and skill levels ride for fitness and fellowship and to support worthy causes including the fights against multiple sclerosis and breast cancer. While on the road, the team's friendly spirit and distinctive white jerseys with the Episcopal shield help to spread the name and message of Palmer Church.

The Holy Spokes have informal rides throughout the year and formally participate in two major organized events each year:

- The BP MS 150, a two-day ride in April from Houston to Austin, benefiting MS research. It is the largest fundraising ride of its kind, supporting vital services for men, women and children living with multiple sclerosis.
- The Tour de Cure bike ride in the countryside around Waller, Texas. The Palmer team of Melanie Fahey, Deborah Giannoni, Ellee de Groot and George Webb covered over 300 miles and raised nearly \$1000 for diabetes education, advocacy and research.

Join the Holy Spokes to ride the MS 150 in 2017! Make new friends, spend time outside in the beautiful Texas countryside in the spring, get in shape, and help support the fight against multiple sclerosis. The Holy Spokes is a group of (mostly) Palmers who enjoy cycling and train together to ride 150 miles from Houston to Austin over 2 days in the biggest charity cycling ride in the country. This year the ride is April 29-30. We also welcome folks who want to participate in the training rides with us but can't commit to the MS150. For more information please email Melanie Fahey (melanie.fahey@gmail.com) or Jennifer Macia (jennmacia@gmail.com). More detailed information is available on the Holy Spokes ministry page on the Palmer website.

Kairos Prison Ministry

Prison is a dark, hopeless place. Prisoners often live their lives without friends, without family, staring at the prison bars and feeling guilt and anger burning in their hearts. Spouses, parents and relatives of the incarcerated often "do time" right along with their loved ones, feeling alone and guilty.

Through the work of over 30,000 volunteers, Kairos Prison Ministry brings the light, love and friendship of Jesus Christ into their lives. They know they are forgiven, and they know they are loved. It is truly a life changing, and often life saving experience.

The Kairos program is a weekend that consists of carefully structured talks, meditations, and individual and group activities led by same gender volunteers. It is an invitation to live in a personal relationship with the living Christ.

For many participants, the Kairos Weekend creates the desire to become a Christian, and for others the desire to continue his/her spiritual growth. After the Kairos Inside Weekend, "Prayer and Share" accountability groups are held weekly, and Reunions with Kairos volunteers monthly. The Carol Vance unit has done 3 Kairos weekends in 2016 with 126 prisoners impacted by this program. Kairos is supported by church communities and volunteers from the Houston area. Current Palmer volunteers are Fr. John Price, Pat Robson, and Carole & David Mather. For more info: www.kairosprisonministry.org

Pat Robson

Media Ministry

The media ministry maintains the sound system in the nave, St Bede's, and the sound and video in the parish hall. In addition, we record the service each Sunday and provide the sermon audio file for posting on the website. We have one paid assistant who balances the sound at the 9:00 and 11:00 service and edits the recorded service to provide the sermon for posting. We have one other paid assistant who fills in when needed.

Thanks to a generous donation we were able to replace the ailing amplifier in the parish hall and replace the dated video projector with an HD projector. This new equipment also allows us to more easily connect to laptop computers when there is a need to show video from them.

An additional donation allowed us to replace the aging amplifiers in the nave. The new technology employed with them eliminates several dated pieces of equipment and prevents a pending failure. In addition, people seated in the chancel can better hear the service.

This year we plan to provide a loudspeaker in the sacristy for the altar guild, similar to the one in the narthex. We have demonstrated we can get fairly good audio recordings of the choir and hope to install a more permanent system and be able to post recordings of the psalm or an occasional anthem on the church website. We are looking for additional volunteer help with these efforts.

Submitted by Glenn Turner

Music at Palmer

2016 was another bustling year for Palmer's music ministry, which includes choirs and music making opportunities for K-12 and adults.

On every "Serve Sunday" during 2016 we were excited to be invited to offer hymn and carol sing-alongs, visiting three assisted living facilities with groups of enthusiastic choristers and parishioners of all ages! In May the adult choir and members of the St. Cecilia youth choir presented a very popular and well-attended "Tex-mex& Broadway tunes" fiesta night, as a fundraiser to help offset costs for our July tour to San Antonio, where we were invited to sing a choral residency and services at historic St. Marks Episcopal Church. Johnna Kinkaid, Norma Beazily, Martha Bersch, Alice Ilian, Catherine Beebe and many others helped make the SA fund raiser a rousing success, thank you all! Palmer's carpenter/maintenance staff Gerry Sandoval offered an awesome Mexican Folklorica" dance troop to entertain, and his wife and daughter danced with the ensemble. The costumes were spectacular as was the music and dancing! Dick Viebig was our master of ceremonies, Yuri McCoy played cocktail music, and Brady Knapp accompanied our choir and Sacred Arts Interns and staff singers in music from Broadway musicals and the mariachi repertoire. A highlight of the night was Father Neil and Carrie Willard's unexpected but fantastic dance routine!!!

The children's choirs, children's choir director Eric Murillo, and four of our amazing Sacred Arts Interns (Alexandra Summerour, Kaylie Kahlich, Megan Vaughan and Katherine Glinka) led the annual Blessing of the animals on Oct. 8th. Earlier this fall the St. Cecilia and St. Gregory's choirs enjoyed a fun fellowship afternoon together at "Dave&Busters", and the St. Nicholas and Cherub choirs enjoyed a fun morning together at "Chuck E. Cheese"!

The NPR broadcast "With heart and voice" aired recordings of Palmer's choirs on four occasions. Our organist Ken Cowan, and former associate organist Yuri McCoy were also featured on NPR's broadcast "pipedreams"! Ken Cowan offered Marcel Dupré's "Stations of the cross" on the afternoon of Palm Sunday, and parishioner Carol Streatfeild read a translation of Paul Caudel's poetry before each station. The Dupré offering is poignant and inspiring and was the perfect way to punctuate the day and to begin Holy Week. All of the choirs and organists offered Advent Lessons & Carols, and the adult choir offered three Choral Evensong services (plus a fourth in San Antonio!). The St. Gregory and St. Cecilia choirs and staff singers provided music for the Easter Vigil and the second Sunday of Easter.

In May the Palmer Schola Cantorum, a chamber ensemble of members from the adult choir, were invited to be the featured choir on a new compact disc titled “So the night fall” the music of Palmer’s composer-in-residence, parishioner David Ashley White. The new disc was auditioned, produced by professional sound engineer Ryan Edwards, and now offered commercially on the prestigious Gothic Records label. You can order copies of the disc through the Palmer music office, and several selections have already been featured on various NPR broadcasts. An interview and article about David White’s life and works, compositional process and pedigree, and his long connection to Palmer Church and U of H, was published in Fanfare magazine: the American Record Guide. David White wrote several new anthems and hymns for the Palmer choir during the church year.

In June, Houston hosted the national convention for the American Guild of Organists and Palmer Church was one of the major venues for this large ecumenical event. The Palmer Schola Cantorum led by Brady Knapp and accompanied by Yuri McCoy, sang Choral Evensong for the conference on June 19th to a standing room only crowd of church musicians from across the country. During the AGO week Palmer organist Ken Cowan was featured in standing room only concerts in the organ hall at Rice University, and organist Joby Bell played several concerts at Palmer later during the AGO week. During Lent of 2016 Dr. Robert Bates, Professor of Organ at the University of Houston offered a concert of organ music by François Couperin.

Submitted by: Dr. Brady Knapp, Director of Music

Order of St. Luke

Order of St. Luke (“OSL”) is a ministry for healing prayer at Palmer. OSL is a non-denominational order with a specific training program based on biblical sources that practices the healing power of prayer. OSL has provided two primary services to the parish, healing prayer during regular services, and at the Wednesday healing service. During the summer months, OSL provide a class and brown bag supper for the parish on Wednesday evenings, called “Pretty Good Wednesdays.” We maintain an OSL prayer list separate and apart from our prayer duties during worship services for all those who reach out to us to ask for healing prayer, and part of our mission is to conduct an active and lively personal prayer life. We also meet once a month as a group to continue our studies and fellowship. We participate in the 9 am and 11 am Sunday services, and provide healing prayer during communion and after the service. Our prayer time is part of the Wednesday service. We are currently staffed with enough trained volunteers to provide volunteers for these worship services, but we would greatly welcome volunteers, and will commence a training program this spring.

Adrienne Randle Bond and Mary Ann Starks

Outreach Ministries

In 2016, the Palmer Church family was busy carrying out our mission to know and share the love of Jesus Christ beyond our walls! In April, we kicked off our quarterly Serve Sundays. Each Serve Sunday, about 125 Palmers of all ages went out in teams to participate in a wide range of projects. Over the course of three Serve Sundays in 2016, we served 18 different organizations in the City of Houston, including New Hope Housing, The Beacon, The Emergency Aid Coalition, and many more. In June, a team of 15 youth and adults traveled to Costa Rica to partner with the Episcopal Diocese of Costa Rica, where we helped with construction on Ascension Church in San Jose. Over the course of a year, Palmer Place Apartment Ministry served 28 different patients and their families, providing a loving and hospitable place to stay during long term medical treatment. Our Refugee Resettlement ministry sponsored a refugee family from the Congo. Finally, a team of women began hosting a monthly Blessed Breakfast at New Hope Housing, providing breakfast and fellowship for women residents. Please join us as we continue to serve the community in 2017!

The Rev’d Alex Easley

Palmer Creative Artist Community

The mission of the Palmer Creative Artists Community (PCAC) is to support and encourage beginning artists as well as professional ones to foster the continuing development of the creative call and to engage arts and artists in the spiritual life of the church. Formed in the spring of 2010, the PCAC has sponsored Artisans “Market” events; and other art exhibits on the Palmer Church campus. In the spring of 2014, the parish opened its Fra Angelico Gallery to showcase works by artists of all ages including work by artists from other churches and community groups in the Houston area. In early 2016, the parish dedicated the Sacred Arts Room. Palmer invites artists of all ages and those curious about the arts to visit the Sacred Arts Room for study, conversation, exploration, and prayerful creative expression. We encourage all interested artists - young, old, and in between -- to show their work in the Fra Angelico Gallery. For more information, contact Sherry Byrd (Sherry@SherryByrd.com) or Jackie Campbell (jcampbell8404@sbcglobal.net).

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie Campbell and Sherry Byrd

Palmer Medical Center Ministry

We have had another active year of meeting the needs of patients from out-of-town who are here seeking treatment in the Texas Medical Center. These patients and their caregivers are thrust into an unfamiliar environment and are often frightened. We assess their practical and spiritual needs. Many of our pastoral ministries then step in to help. Palmer Place Apartments, Stephen Ministry, James Ministry, Daughters of the King, Order of St. Luke, Moms’ Helping Hands, Eucharistic Visitors, and others including our clergy get involved. The patients and their caregivers are always grateful for any help and welcome us into their lives. We depend on Palmers to alert us to incoming patients from out-of-town. Many other contacts come from other Episcopal churches as well as former patients. This is truly a rewarding ministry.

Suzie Dennis

Palmer Medical Center Ministry Coordinator

Palmer Refugee Resettlement Ministry

Palmer partnered with Episcopal Migration Ministries and Interfaith Ministries again in 2016 to help welcome and provide support for a family of refugees who were resettled in Houston. St Christopher’s Episcopal Church asked to work alongside us in helping to integrate this family in their Houston community. Budgeted funds and generous donations of both cash and in-kind donations of gently used furniture, clothing, toys, and house wares helped a team of parishioners from both churches furnish an apartment for the arriving family. The family is from the Congo and consists of a mother and father and four children. The mother was pregnant and has since delivered a healthy baby boy.

They were met at the airport, welcomed with a hot meal, provided groceries, one month’s rent, and assisted with transportation for initial appointments and school registrations. School uniforms were provided for the three school aged children and baby gifts were taken for the expectant mother. In addition a wonderful baby shower was planned and held at St Christopher’s. Of necessity, there have been many doctor’s visits and the car trips afforded time for visiting and language building. Several women from Palmer conducted English lessons on a weekly basis with the family and all parties benefited from the comraderie and information shared.

Palmer is generous in offering donations in support of refugees and in setting up the apartments. This family garnered more physical support than in previous sponsorships and the benefit derived from the mentoring and friendships was a wonderful thing to see. We plan to continue offering financial and other meaningful and necessary support for incoming refugees as the need and sponsorship opportunities present themselves. If you can help or want to know more about the ministry, please contact Frances Vonk at fvonk@yahoo.com.

Francis Vonk, Chairperson

Pastoral Care Ministries

Palmer continues to be a warm and welcoming community for the sick and the suffering. Our Medical Center Ministry cared for many out-of-town guests receiving long-term care in the Texas Medical Center, and our own Pastoral Care team made many visits to hospitalized and homebound parishioners. The Community of Hope added three new members to their ranks, and they have also begun helping with Pastoral Care ministry at Palmer. In addition, Lay Eucharistic Visitors go forth every Sunday to take Communion to the homebound and hospitalized, so that we may all be “one body, for we all share one bread, one cup.” Stephen Ministers continue to walk alongside individuals who find themselves in a difficult season in life, and the Wemmicks Caregiver Support Group continues to provide fellowship and encouragement to people who are caring for elderly parents. Our knitters made many beautiful Prayer Shawls, which we share with those who are sick or suffering, and our Mother’s Helping Hands has provided meals and more for the families of new babies. Finally, the new Seniors Ministry was formed! This ministry has begun assessing the needs of Palmer’s older members and is planning a host of educational opportunities for the upcoming year.

The Rev’d Alex Easley

Safeguarding Gods’ People and Children

The final promise of our Baptismal Covenant urges us to: *Strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being.*

Here at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church we take this promise faithfully and demonstrate this faith by requiring that all congregation members who are in contact with vulnerable adults or in Children’s ministry are Certified in Safeguarding.

This Certification is supported by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and with their help a team of volunteers at Palmer interview, reference check and train congregation members, volunteers and staff in how to prevent, spot and, should it be necessary, report sexual abuse of an individual.

Our classes are advertised on a central Diocese database and the training is available to anyone who would like to take it both in and out the Palmer community. Last year we Certified 58 Palmer congregation members.

Feedback from participants lets us know that although the topic matter is not a pleasant one the information is valuable and useful in all walks of life. Palmer’s focus on this Certification allows us, as congregation members, to know we are doing the best we possibly can to educate and prevent the debilitating effects of sexual abuse on our community.

Pamela Harvey

Scouting At Palmer

Thanks to Palmer Church, Troop 511 had another great year in 2016. As of December 31, 2016, Troop 511 had 18 members. In the history of Troop 511 to December 31, 2016, 14 of the 64 (22%) members have become Eagle Scouts. One of the 14 Eagle Scouts received his award in 2016.

In calendar 2016 (January to December), Troop 511 had 8 short-term/weekend camping trips (less than 72 hours in length) and 2 long-term/week-long camping trips (more than 72 hours in length). Those camping trips included weekends at state parks and Boy Scouts of America’ properties as well as a one-week summer camp in Minnesota at Many Point Scout Reservation and a 10-day trip to Alaska. The troop has also given service (service projects) to our community including Great Wednesdays at Palmer and the Souper Bowl of Caring.

Troop 511 planned 6 short-term and 1, possibly 2, long-term camping trips and several service projects from January to August 2017. We look to increase our youth and adult membership (hopefully increase to 25 youth) as well as find a permanent/secure/rent-free home for our troop trailer.

We look forward to continuing our service to Palmer Church and our community in 2017.

Elliott Ballard, Scoutmaster, Troop 511

Star of Hope

Each and every day of the year, 24 hours a day, men, women and children with nowhere to turn, come to Star of Hope for food, shelter and emergency services and spiritual rescue. Star of Hope has 5 locations for their varied services. There are many opportunities to help from a one time shot or for helping with long term needs. Over 68 Palmers have volunteered over 260 hours in 2016. Star of Hope is changing their procedures for volunteering to make it easier to sign up. Jenn Vaughn is involved in a group that volunteers at one of the Star of Hope housing locations.

Connie Wallace

Sts. Mary and Martha Altar Guild

The purpose of Sts. Mary and Martha Altar Guild is to prepare our church for services that are beautiful and orderly so that worshippers will not be distracted from their worship of God.

Preparing for worship involves the purchase, preparation, cleaning and care of furnishings for the services (wine, wafers, linens, candles, brass and silver, altar hangings, vestments, and decorations), setting out everything that is needed for services and clean-up after services. Along with Palmer's five regular Eucharist's per week, we are also responsible for preparation of all special services, such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, and Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter services. These services may take place in any of our four worship spaces: the Nave, St. Bede's Chapel, Holy Cross or the Columbarium.

Richard Porter, Altar Guild Director, coordinates guild activities. Glenn Turner, as head of the Worship Committee, is our liaison. The group is divided into four weekly teams headed by Kathy Herrin (first week), Vickie Harshbarger (second week), Carole Tabor (third week), and Linda Bracey (fourth week). These teams are responsible for the coordination of everything that takes place during their week. The Altar Guild rotates duties for all 5th week Sundays.

Linda Bracey is an assistant wedding coordinator and acts as the Altar Guild's liaison to the Wedding Guild. Helen Toombs is our supply chairman who inventories, orders, purchases, and delivers supplies. We also work closely with the funeral coordinators Vickie Harshbarger and Ann Pittman, who are also Altar Guild members. Our group of regular members numbered approximately 31 this year. In addition, there are several honorary members and several "Ad Hoc" members who are unable to help in traditional ways, but help us with special projects.

The Altar Guild hosts a Book Club for its members as an extracurricular activity and a chance to socialize. It is held every other month at the home of one of the guild members. We also host at least one luncheon/training session per year to welcome and train new members.

During the 2015-2016 worship year, the guild was able to purchase a new set of light-weight green Chasubles for our clergy during the warmer summer months. These linens were blessed and put into use during the fall of 2016. This purchase was made possible by a generous donation of a Palmer parishioner for which we are truly grateful. Additionally, the Guild purchased a new set of Christmas linens, including a fair linen, purificators and lavabo towels. Thank you Helen Toombs for assisting with the research and purchase of these beautiful pieces.

Working quietly behind the scenes, Altar Guild members preform their sacred duties with a special love and respect for the symbols and sacraments of our faith and worship. Being a member of the guild is a commitment of time and self. It is a labor of love that we preform gladly as a way of giving thanks to God for all that has, so generously, been given to us. We thank you for allowing us to serve and help enhance the beautiful liturgy that identifies Palmer.

Respectfully submitted,
JR Porter, Director

Ushers

The 11:00 usher teams maintained their normal four week rotation throughout the year with each team covering the extra Sunday in each Quarter corresponding with that team's regular rotation. Each team attempted to maintain a roster of at least four members with two having more although it's becoming more difficult to keep those rosters fully staffed. The 9:00 usher teams ended the year on a five week rotation which is essentially the same situation with more members.

In addition to the normal logistical duties involved with directing the flow of communicants, the teams presented the welcoming face of Palmer and attempted to identify those attendees who were newcomers and give them special attention. We also tried to have them introduced to either the Greeters or the Clergy outside after the service. The first impression that a first time visitor has of the congregation has a lot to do with their decision to return. The 11:00 Ushers and Greeters alternated duties with the 9:00 Ushers and Greeters for the services that were combined for special occasions which were more in number this year and also manned a six week stretch of the combined summer services while the 9:00 teams covered the additional six.

We believe that ushering provides a great way for new Palmers to become integrated into our community and by joining an usher team it will allow them to meet existing members of the congregation and become familiar with the services while being shepherded by long term members. We welcome any newcomers sent our way especially from the Pilgrim Class. The Ushers, in concert with the Greeters, present the first face of Palmer and we believe that evangelism is most important to growing the congregation.

Kirk Waldron

Walking The Mourners' Path Grief Ministry

Walking the Mourner's Path, an eight week small group offering support for those grieving the death of a loved one, whether family member, neighbor, co-worker or friend, has been offered at Palmer since 2006. Each group is facilitated by two trained persons and a clergy member is present as well. Jeanine Baker and Betty Key serve as our facilitators and Linda Shelton serves as clergy and trained facilitator. The groups are open to our larger community as a pastoral outreach of our parish.

We continued our practice of sending a letter, information brochure, and booklet of meditations to those in our parish whom we learn have experienced the death of a loved one. A session was held in the spring of 2016 and a new session is planned to begin in February of 2017. We are grateful for the opportunity to be present with and walk alongside people on this very special path. Please contact any of us for more information.

Faithfully, The Rev. Linda Shelton, Deacon

Wedding Coordinators

For 2016, the wedding coordinators have been Ragna Case, Wendy Robertson, Jeanine Baker, and Sondra Maxfield. As Palmer representatives, these coordinators work in pairs, in concert with the priest performing the marriage, to guide the bride and groom in scheduling and in attending to the details of their wedding ceremony at Palmer. Attention is given to the requirements for marriage in the Episcopal Church and laws of the State of Texas, with emphasis on the solemn and sacred nature of marriage in the Church. Every effort is made to ensure that all the wedding needs of the bride and groom are met, and that everything goes smoothly on the wedding day.

Other ministries who contribute greatly in this effort are the Altar Guild, the Acolyte Corps, the Bell Ringers, the sextants, and our Music Ministry. We would especially like to thank JR Porter and Linda Bracey (Altar Guild), Suzanne Miller (Acolytes), Allen Nunley and Lynsey Slavonic (Bell Ringers), Brady Knapp and Ken Cowan (Music Ministry), Dennis Kutach (flowers/catering) and Jimmy Parrales (Sextants) for their wonderful spirit of cooperation and willingness to coordinate the contribution of each of their ministries. Also, a special thank you to Sue Howard for her guidance and assistance with the church calendar and Dustin Jesudason (Publications Editor) for his fine work on the wedding leaflets. The wedding coordinators, greatly appreciate their gracious and proactive support.

There were 10 wedding ceremonies performed at Palmer in 2016, (Rev. Willard - 2, Rev. Brooks - 2, Rev. Easley - 2, Rev. Strobel - 2, Rev. Craven - 1, and Bishop Doyle - 1). There are currently 2 weddings on the calendar for 2017.

Ragna Case, Wendy Robertson, Jeanine Baker, and Sondra Maxfield

Women's Spirituality Group

The women of Palmer's WSG have been together for about 20 years, ever since we formed with the help of the Rev'd Maribeth Conroy. Through the years we have developed a community in which we have supported each other, and the mission of Palmer Church. Each of us has at one time or another belonged to one or more of the ministries at Palmer, depending on her spiritual gifts.

We study and pray together, reading many and varied theological books in our search for God's place in our lives. We have become acquainted with the works of many theologians through their discussions via DVD. We also laugh as well as cry at life's wonderful ways. I do believe that each of us is fed by this group of faithful women.

Traditionally, we have had two retreats a year: a day retreat in Advent at the home of a member, and an overnight Lenten retreat at a nearby retreat house. Both are facilitated by a priest. Co-leaders are Eleanor Viebig and Pat Reed. All women are invited; we meet on Mondays from 12:45-2:30 PM. Bring a lunch and join us.

Eleanor Viebig

Worship Council

The Worship Council consists of representatives of Acolytes, Vergers, Lectors, Chalice Bearers (Lay Eucharistic Ministers or LEMs), Ushers, Music, Altar Guild, Clergy, Flower Guild, Order of Service proof readers, and Wedding Coordination. Working with the clergy it oversees the services offered during the year.

Meetings are held in the Chancery at 5:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month and additionally as needed. Meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend.

Dub Brooks retired this year and now Neil Willard and Linda Shelton are the clergy representatives. We thank Dub for making real progress in improving the worship at Palmer and look forward to working with Neil as we make future changes.

Carolyn Baker has stepped down from coordinating the Lector Workshops and scheduling lectors for special services. We thank Carolyn for getting this program up and running. Many people have remarked on the improvement in the readings at Sunday worship because of this. Sarah Breckbill has taken up this ministry and the workshops this fall were well received. All lectors are expected to attend an annual workshop.

Rodrigo Canedo has taken over the large task of preparing the liturgical schedule from Michael Massey. The schedule is prepared every six weeks and this requires a great deal of patience while herding cats. The schedule includes Vergers, Acolytes, Lectors, LEMs, Ushers and Greeters. The Worship Council also orders lay vestments as needed. We have added a few this year.

Submitted by Glenn Turner

Yellowstone Academy

Yellowstone Academy is a private Christian school located in the Third Ward, serving pre-k through eighth grade children. The pantry at Yellowstone stocks canned goods and healthy individually wrapped snacks for the students to select to take home to supplement their evening meal. Palmers have been very generous in donating these snacks monthly. A few Palmers also give of their own time tutoring, helping in the scout programs and assisting teachers on field trips. Donations are delivered to Yellowstone monthly. The director and the staff are so appreciative of our efforts. Our Stock the Pantry drives will begin again this month on the 4th Sunday and will continue through May.

Jane Strickland