

PALMER MEMORIAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

JANUARY 21, 2018

Report of the Senior Warden

For the lay leadership, 2017 began with organization of the Vestry into Councils with responsibility to implement initiatives and needs identified in 2016. The Evangelism Council enhanced our new member efforts with better publicity for the Rector's Reception, printing of "I'm New Here" cards, a system for follow-up, and further plans for a welcome packet. The Communication Council chair began to meet regularly with the church staff to be sure all communication, both print and digital, is timely and correct. A system has been put into place detailing when and how parishioners are to contact the responsible staff person to place an announcement in the appropriate digital or print medium. The Worship Council met regularly with staff and clergy to be sure all aspects of our worship, from Altar Guild to Acolytes, are coordinated and staffed. This Council in conjunction with Staff designed the new service booklet with its emphasis on the use of The Book of Common Prayer.

I cannot acknowledge enough the hard work and dedication of the Stewardship Council. Under the leadership of Ellee de Groot, Will Denham, and Linda Sylvan, our financial needs were clearly communicated to the Parish and an effective program of pledge follow-up instituted. Jim Mercurio, who also served on the Finance Committee, kept the Vestry informed as to expenses and cash flow. Although we again fell short in total pledge receipts compared to what we had budgeted, we were able to meet our expenses and even do some needed, non-emergency maintenance without having to borrow money. Even more stewardship education and efforts are planned for 2018.

Roger Hutchison, Director of Christian Formation and Parish Life, planned and executed a variety of educational programs. The Sunday School program for younger children was successful with increasing numbers throughout the year. The program for older youth took a significant step forward with the addition of Davis Mathis as Youth Director. Successful mission programs involving the youth were conducted to Costa Rica and Missionpalooza in Louisiana. The Parish Retreat and the Women's Retreat, both at Camp Allen, built community and fellowship.

Throughout the Fall the Rector's Forum hosted outside speakers over eight weeks focusing on educational equity in Houston. The various Bible study groups and the Wednesday night programs were well attended. Alex Easley, our Curate, led a program on women in the Bible in the Spring. In the Fall, the Rev. Liz Parker and John Wallace presented a six-week course on the Living Compass Wellness Program and later conducted a Saturday retreat on the topic. Jerusalem Peace Builders class explored the topic of reconciliation. Even with all this activity within the church walls, our outreach to the community continued with Palmer Place Apartments, Archway Academy, and Ashes to Go among many other ministries. Serve Sundays were truly inspirational with increased activities and participation for all ages. Alex Easley began this program and it has been carried on through the leadership of Kelly Williams.

Our dedicated clergy and staff continued to provide the leadership and structure to keep these many programs going as well as providing us with beautiful liturgy, meaningful sermons, and pastoral care. The Rev. Neil Willard leads with both integrity and a steady optimistic calmness that reduces stress and enables others to contribute fully. The Rev. Liz Parker is the very definition of compassion and pastoral care. The Rev. David Wantland, in his first year as Curate, effectively led our response to the needs created by Hurricane Harvey and has been a strong voice from the pulpit. An irreplaceable loss for Palmer in the coming year is due to the retirement of our Deacon, Linda Shelton. She has been for years an outstanding example of servant leadership. Her work in pastoral care and refugee resettlement (for Palmer and the Diocese) and just her constant presence willing to do whatever task was needed has been an inspiration. Fortunately, Linda will still grace us with her presence but without all those responsibilities.

Our music program, under the leadership of Brady Knapp, continues to set new standards of excellence as well as being the bedrock of our worship services. Evensong services and special music at Christmas and Easter bring both great pleasure and spiritual depth to those occasions. With Ken Cowan and Grant Wareham we surely have the most talented organists in the entire city. Courtney Daniel Knapp has led the children's choirs with skill and experience, and the joy those choirs bring to the services at which they perform is palpable.

All of us at Palmer owe a great deal of gratitude to our hard-working Palmer staff. Tara McConathy, Sue Howard, Jessica Evans and Dustin Jesudason continue to keep the church running well and have given me complete support. Jimmy Parrales ably manages our sextons and always seems to be present and helpful. Clarence Hulin manages our security with a pleasant disposition no matter what the weather. I am thankful for the services of our retiring Vestry members: Courtney Daniel Knapp, Ellee de Groot, Jim Lober, Marie Wehrung, and Trent Williams. Courtney had served as Senior Warden last year and her counsel and advice were indispensable. Ellee de Groot, as already mentioned, has headed stewardship for two years and has handled that task with grace and energy. Jim Lober served faithfully in the important role as clerk, and Marie always spoke with clarity and good judgment. Trent Williams as Junior Warden shepherded the time-consuming task of improving the regulation of our air conditioning and installation of new chillers from which we will soon benefit. These members served Palmer with distinction.

Being Senior Warden of such an historic but still dynamic parish as Palmer is both rewarding and frustrating. Rewarding in that I continue to be amazed at the healing and transforming work done by Palmer members every day. Frustrating in that I know we could do more if we had more resources. Having said that, however, our most precious resource is our Christian community and that community will continue to spread the Gospel through thought, word and deed in 2018.

Jim Key, Senior Warden

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Ministry Reports

Alternative Gift Market

The Alternative Gift Market offers an alternative option to buy a “gift” to honor friends and family by supporting Palmer’s outreach activities. The 2017 Alternative Gift Market was held over three Sundays during Advent. In addition to the Sunday market, donations were also received online via Palmer’s eGiving options and through donations sent to the church office. The total donated was \$8,244. These funds are designated by the giver to go to one of the following ministries: Archway Academy, Emergency Aid Coalition, Kairos, Palmer Place Apartments, 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 2017 Palmer Church requested 75 children and received 68 names. Palmer parishioners enthusiastically volunteered with this ministry and we were able to adopt and deliver gifts to 66 children in the homes of 27 caregivers. Due to the larger number of caregivers, and the need for delivery volunteers to be Safeguarding trained, drivers were asked to go to 3-4 different destinations.

Jenn Vaughan

Archway Academy

Archway Academy opened its doors 15 years ago with 6 students. Fast forward, the 2016-2017 school year saw Archway serve 143 high school students in recovery from substance use disorders, with a 55% sobriety rate. Before attending Archway many of our students did not expect to graduate from high school much less go to college. There were 33 seniors in our graduating class last school year and 94% are attending college. They are going to schools such as the University of Houston, Texas A&M, St. Edwards University, Houston Community College, Texas Tech, San Jacinto College and Concordia College (just to name a few). Currently, there are 38 sober high schools in the United States, with Archway being the largest and one of the oldest. Archway is viewed as a model for groups wanting to start sober high schools across the country. During the last year we were contacted and visited by people from Illinois, Florida, Colorado, California, numerous places in Texas and even the United Kingdom. They wanted to find out how Archway works. A big part of what makes Archway work is our generous supporters such as Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church. Without you we would not be able to provide our students a sober environment in which to get their high school education.

Sasha Mclean

Baptism Ministry

The Baptism Ministry prepared for 13 baptisms across 7 services, including a few private baptisms. We have changed the process of preparing for baptisms, where a family must first meet with the Rev. Liz Parker. They must download a copy of the Baptism Form they get from me, and take it with them to their meeting with Liz. After discussing the theological side of baptism and meeting with her, they are added to the schedule. There are officially 5 Baptism services throughout the year: Epiphany Sunday, Easter Saturday at the 7 PM Vigil service, Easter II, Pentecost, and All Saint’s Day. Another possibility is when the Bishop is present for confirmations, and then, it would be at the 9 AM service. Parents and Godparents meet with the Baptism coordinator the Saturday before the service to rehearse the logistics of the baptism.

Catherine Beebe

Boy Scout Troop 511

Boy Scout Troop 511 was first chartered to Palmer Church by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) on January 10, 2006. As of December 31, 2017, Troop 511 re-chartered (re-registered with the BSA for 2018) with 23 youth members and 19 adults. In its 12-year history, Troop 511 has had 15 of the 71 (21%) members become Eagle Scouts. One of the 15 Eagle Scouts earned the rank in 2017 and is expected to formally receive it in 2018. In calendar 2017 (January to December), Troop 511 had 7 short-term (weekend camping trips less than 72 hours in length) and 2 long-term (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 the Davis Mountains in West Texas at Buffalo Trail Scout Reservation and a frigid backpacking trek (trail temps between 25 and -3 degrees) along the Appalachian Trail of the Great Smoky Mountains in North Carolina. The troop has also given service (service projects) to our community including Great Wednesdays at Palmer and the Souper Bowl of Caring. Troop 511 has planned 4 short-term and 2 long-term camping trips (one in New Mexico, one in Maine) as well as numerous service projects from January to August 2018. We hope to increase our youth and adult membership (hopefully increase to 27 youth). We are very grateful for the support given by Palmer Church and look forward to continuing our service to Palmer Church and our community in 2018.

Elliot Ballard, Scoutmaster, Troop 511

Change Ringers of Palmer

We are ringing almost every weekend for call to service before the 9 am service and between 9 and 11 am services. We have rung for four weddings and two funerals this year. We have rung for Healing service before Thanksgiving, as well as for Christmas Eve Service, New Year's Day and Christmas day, and in recent times for two ordinations. We have rung (tower bells) before the lessons and carols service and handbells afterwards.

We were a featured news story on ABC 13 in December after a photojournalist came and spent an hour a half with us. See <http://abc13.com/society/medieval-art-of-change-ringing-fills-houston-churches-with-music-/2786115/>

Our band of regular service ringers is up to 15 now, and we typically have 4-5 before the 9 AM service and 6-8 for the ringing in between services. On our entire ringing list, we have 11 parishioners and 11 non-parishioners; we desire to recruit within the parish. We had one tower maintenance day in 2017.

For 2018, we plan to continue the growth and improvement of our skills, in particular, more method ringing and fewer call changes. We plan to continue to increase the number of times we ring before the 9 AM service. We are looking into collaborating with the choir on Serve Sundays as they sing for seniors.

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.

At the heart of Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church is a dynamic, growing faith community of children, youth and adults! Our programs aim to foster God's love in a progressive, inclusive setting.

This past fall, The Sunday morning Rector's Forum at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church focused on the importance of quality public education for all children and lifting up how communities of faith are already strengthening public education in Houston and surrounding areas. We had the opportunity to hear from a diverse group of practicing educators, experienced community leaders, and hands-on researchers. We explored ways that Palmer can build community through local partnerships, action, and service. Other Sunday morning classes included "Where the Wild Things Are" and "The Book of John."

Palmer also offers three Bible Studies during the week; a men's, women's, and co-ed Bible Study. Please visit our website for details.

Children's Formation:

Our ministry to and with children tries to embody all aspects of our parish mission statement: to know and share the love of Jesus Christ. All children are welcome at Palmer Church, and we see and embrace them as an essential part of our community. In our interactions with our youngest members, we strive to live out the baptismal covenant and teach our children the tenants of the Christian faith.

This begins with worship. Liturgy Preparation (Liturgy Prep) is offered each Sunday as an integral part of the 9 AM and 11 AM worship services. This special time is spent singing together, praying together, and talking about the gospel. Liturgy Preparation is offered to all children.

This year we began the third year of *Weaving God's Promises* with the focus on *Weaving God's Beloved Community*. Please see our website for 2018 offerings.

Great Wednesday:

Great Wednesday dinners continue to provide a time for fellowship before going on to one of our formation offerings. Classes offered in 2017 included: *Jerusalem Peacebuilders*, *Ritual*, *Living Compass Short Courses*, *Seeking the Face of Jesus*. Please see our website for 2018 offerings.

Roger Hutchison

Costa Rica Mission Trip

Last year there were 9 who traveled to work in Limon at the San Marcos School. We completed the majority of painting at the school (outdoor walls, iron fences), as well as refinishing all of the school desks. Our total cost (excluding airfare) for the project (including room/board) was \$13,000+. The project cost typically provided by us each year is \$5000. The remainder of the cost was for room/board and our daily driver. Depending on the number traveling, the additional costs determine the amount each person must pay. Clearly, this amount is offset by donations and we were thankful for the large amount of contributions made last year, which reduced out of pocket for the travelers.

Our spiritual needs are met each day with morning prayer prior to our work beginning, and evening compline. Jeff Bohanski provided these offerings during the 2017 trip. During the work at the school, we developed many relationships with the children at the school, the principal and her staff and the priest at the church on the same grounds as San Marcos School. Both the priest and principal joined us during morning prayer, which was held in the nave of the church. A perfect setting!

Other projects during the year included additional school and church construction. There are few Episcopal churches in Costa Rica, so a long-term plan is to grow the number of churches there. Solar panels were placed at two schools enabling the school to run on "clean", solar energy. There are plans to build a dental clinic, a much needed service. Other offerings include clergy vestments, soccer cleats for youth (this is huge to them!!!!) and clothing.

Travel dates for 2018 are July 7 - July 14. We do not yet know the project, but will close to the time of the trip. We could do work in San Jose or Limon.

Since last year's travel, the decision was made for multiple Houston area Episcopal churches to meet monthly (total of 9), with a different church hosting each lunch meeting, Costa Rica Collaboration. We have now met twice. The idea is to share experiences, offer other church parishioners the opportunity to travel with another church, and to collaborate on projects. We agree that this work is really intended to continue to build and grow our relationship with the Diocese of Costa Rica. Bishop Monterroso, while now in Houston, continues to be deeply involved and committed to this work and relationship building.

We are working with a new Costa Rican Diocesan Companion, Ali Norman, who is assisted by Jerome Melendez.

Projects for youth are very important, and we welcome youth participants. Please check with the ministry on age requirements. The ideal maximum number of participants (youth and adult) on each trip is 20.

Catherine Thompson

Palmer Creative Artists Community

The mission of the Palmer Creative Artists Community (PCAC) is to support and encourage beginning and experienced artists 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).

Jackie Campbell, Sherry and Randy Byrd

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 2017, David Wantland shared his faith journey with us. Other meetings we shared "Why We Became a Daughter", "Prayer Through Photographs" and decorated our Chrismon Tree for the parish. In 2018, our Saturday meetings topics will be "Prayer Through Music", "Prayer Through Objects", a Parish Quiet Day, "Prayer Through Self-Awareness" and "Prayer Through Walking the Labyrinth."

Officers through August 2017 were President-Betty Key, Vice-President-Arlene Price, and Secretary-Suzanne Miller. Officers through August 2018 are President- Jeanine Baker, Vice-President- Suzanne Miller and Secretary-Linda Soliz. We welcome interested women to learn about our Order.

Jeanine Baker

Dinner and Discussion Group

The Palmer meetings known as Dinner and Discussion are more accurately described as an activity than as a group, since participants differ from month to month and welcoming varying degrees of involvement is a basic principle. Our gatherings take place on second Fridays from 7:00 to 9:30 PM from September through May. A planning meeting occurred in August, at which participants offered their homes as meeting locations and volunteered to line up presenters for topics that were chosen by vote. Among topics of the past year have been a personal experience of traveling the Camino de Santiago, the planning for preservation of Buffalo Bayou and surroundings, current international policy challenges, and viewing nutrition as medicine.

Dinner made up of salads, main dishes, and desserts brought by attendees preceded our programs. Notice of each month's gathering was distributed from the Palmer office to an email list, as well as through items in the weekly "Palmer" and the Sunday bulletin inserts. Attendance averaged 30 to 35 people each Friday evening.

Mary Tobin

Downtown Lunch Group

The Palmer Downtown Lunch is an informal gathering at noon the fourth Tuesday of each month (except December). We meet at the Cloister Restaurant (operated by Treebeard's) inside Christ Church Cathedral for fellowship among Palmers who live or work in downtown, or for anyone who finds themselves downtown for the lunch hour. We have a steady number of regulars and newcomers, and regularly see members of the Palmer clergy and staff at the lunch as well. Friends and co-workers are always welcome! Look for the reserved Palmer tables in the back. We hope to see you at the next Downtown Lunch!

Tom Van Arsdel

Emergency Aid Coalition (EAC)

The EAC and Palmer continued their long history of partnership in assisting, clothing, and feeding Houston's working poor and homeless (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 15 member congregations collectively participating in a united effort to feed, clothe and minister to working poor families, the homeless and the newly housed. Palmer also sends congregants to participate on the board of directors, ensuring the best possible management of donated and granted time, funds and resources.

Palmer's involvement this past year included "Serve Sunday" efforts with projects both on and off campus at the EAC location. Serve Sunday efforts have included: helping sort record-levels of clothing donations, packing and distributing sack lunches, and sorting 30 lb. bags of beans and rice into quart-sized, family-portions.

Other, significant Palmer contributions included:

- Participation in the annual, fund-raising gala
- EAC's support in the Advent Gift Market/Alternate Giving Market remains strong
- Several Palmer members are also weekly volunteers, supporting the EAC's efforts
- Palmer's annual "Undie Sunday" drive continues to generate appreciated donations of new socks and underwear, items that are difficult to procure through donation
- Palmer has donated more than 300, standard grocery-sized sacks of clothing to the EAC

2017 Emergency Aid Coalition Statistics:

- "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 82 individuals with this program in 2017
- Served 3,091 adults and 2,651 children in the clothing center; the total number of clothing items distributed was 95,219. Of this, 15,846 items were new underwear and socks.
- Provided 71,908 sack lunches to clients
- Provided 625 students with new backpacks, uniforms/vouchers and grade-appropriate school supplies (from school district back-to-school listings). Tim Raymond is Palmer's current representative to the EAC Board, one position remains open.

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

Endowment Fund

The trustees of the Palmer Endowment Fund (the "Endowment") during the year 2017 were Jere Ahrens, Chair; Bob Ittner, Treasurer; Lynn Morstead, Secretary; Pam Lovett and Bet Hunter. Linda Kelly serves as Counsel.

On January 1, 2017, the value of the Endowment assets was \$2,333,982. The major distributions of funds during 2017 were \$150,000 to the Church for maintenance and repairs, \$12,875 to consultants reviewing the heating/air conditioning and \$24,621 for revitalizing the Roy Jones Rose Garden. In the spring of 2017, the trustees also agreed to fund the cost of replacing the air conditioning chillers, estimated at \$200,000. In the fall of 2017, the trustees agreed to fund \$300 per month for maintenance of the rose garden. The Endowment received over \$1,390,000 in contributions for the year, most of which came from one bequest. As of December 31, 2017, the value of the Endowment assets was \$4,034,770. The Endowment assets are professionally managed by Vanguard Assets Management Services within the investment policies set by the trustees.

On January 8, 2018, the trustees agreed to fund \$150,000 to the Church for maintenance and repairs for 2018.

The Daphne Palmer Neville Society continued to add new members in 2017, bringing the total membership to more than 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 to contribute to the Endowment.

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

Jere M. Ahrens, Chair

Eucharistic Visitors

On most Sundays, Holy Communion is taken from one of the Palmer services to those who are hospitalized, homebound, or temporarily unable to attend church. We regularly make visits to Palmer parishioners and visitors, particularly those receiving treatment at the Medical Center. In 2017, our volunteers made 108 visits to share the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Thad Lueders

Evangelism

As the Episcopal Church we exist to follow Jesus and help the whole world to grow relationships with God, with each other, and with creation. Evangelism is one of our most important ministries – this is where we focus on accompanying our neighbors and communities as we all develop relationships with God on the journey.

With the shifting of a number of staffing roles in 2017, The Rev. Liz Parker moved to Pastoral Care and Roger Hutchison, Palmer's Director of Christian Formation and Parish Life, became the staff representative for Evangelism at Palmer. Liz will continue to serve on the Evangelism Council on an "as needed" basis.

After a fantastic job of serving as chair of the Evangelism Council for the past year, Kamron Massumi stepped down from his role but will remain on the council. Join us in thanking Kamron for his passion and energy for evangelism at Palmer.

2017 highlights included a redesigned Welcome/Prayer Card, a redesigned Sunday Service Sheet, Worship Bags for Kids, our "first" Sunday Welcome Reception, and "Thursday Night for Women."

Roger Hutchison

Flower Guild

The Flower Guild was established in 1999 and operates solely from individual financial donations and volunteers. The Guild is responsible for all design work, ordering, installation and take-down of flowers in Palmer's worship spaces. The beauty and the creativity of their works is enjoyed year-round at Palmer but especially at Palm Sunday, Easter and Christmas when they pull out ALL the stops! They also bring extraordinary dedication to special Palmer celebrations such as Confirmations, Baptisms, and Covenant Sunday.

The Guild is responsible for maintaining all greenery in our worship spaces. Thank you, Flower Guild, for your wonderful work. And to all for your generous financial support. And by the way, we are always grateful for additional volunteers and financial donations.

Dennis Kutach

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 at least one major organized event each year: the BP MS 150, a two-day ride in April from Houston to Austin, benefiting multiple sclerosis research and services. It is the largest fundraising ride of its kind in North America, with 13,000 cyclists and 3,500 volunteers participating.

Join the Holy Spokes to ride the MS 150 in 2018! 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. 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. More detailed information is available on the Holy Spokes ministry page on the Palmer website.

Jennifer Macia

Hurricane Harvey

As the Nave and accompanying buildings were thankfully unaffected by the storm, Palmer was able to respond quickly to the needs of our parish and our neighbors in the days, weeks, and months after Hurricane Harvey. At year end, Palmer had received \$84,084.04 in Storm Relief funds and directed \$15,081.42 in resources as well as time and labor among the 38 Palmer families that were affected by the storm. Palmers have been active in the diocesan storm response effort and in other networks throughout Houston. Even though the emergent need has passed, Palmer continues to explore ways to partner with local organizations and area congregations to address the long-term recovery.

The Rev. David Wantland

Jerusalem Peacebuilders

Jerusalem Peacebuilders (JPB) had a breakout year of adult and youth programming in 2017, thanks in large part to the support of Palmer and its parishioners. In the spring, JPB's Co-Founders, The Rev. Canon Nicholas Porter and Stuart Kensinger, led a spring pilgrimage to the Holy Land, with 15 pilgrims from Palmer in attendance. Our summer youth leadership programs in VT, CT, and TX, hosted record numbers of Israeli, Palestinian and American participants. During the Houston area Interfaith Citizenship Institute, Palmer parishioners were quick to respond to calls for volunteer support as part of the Shepherds program. In addition to the arrival of Palmer's Curate, The Rev. David Wantland, JPB greatly benefitted from its placement of a Regional Director, Jack Karn, in Houston. Jack spent the fall months developing connections and partnerships with local schools, faith communities, and other organizations. During the fall semester, JPB conducted Great Wednesday classes examining peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and the situation in the Middle East, with strong average attendance. JPB will build upon this momentum in 2018 with another spring pilgrimage to the Holy Land, more youth and adult formation opportunities, and two summer youth institutes in Houston.

The Rev. David Wantland

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 local volunteers, Kairos Prison Ministry brings the light, love and friendship of Jesus Christ into their lives. They can experience forgiveness, and they know they are loved. It is truly a life changing, and often life-saving experience. Kairos Inside 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, Kairos creates the desire to become a Christian, or to continue his/her spiritual journey. After the Kairos Inside Weekend, "Prayer and Share" accountability groups are held weekly, plus monthly "Reunions" with Kairos volunteers. The Carol Vance unit has done 3 Kairos weekends in 2017 blessing 126 residents and their families. 2017 has also seen an expansion to the Jester III unit to serve even more inmates with 2 Kairos weekends per year. This calls for more volunteers to serve in this life changing ministry. Please support us with your donations as well as with your presence. Visit www.mykairos.org for more info.

Linda Moore & Pat Robson

Living Compass

Living Compass (www.livingcompass.org) invites all of us to journey further into wellness and wholeness. The four compass points – heart, soul, strength, and mind – have their roots in the Old and New Testaments. We accept the invitation to journey by doing our own work, individually and collectively, as moved by the Holy Spirit.

In the past year, there have been several Living Compass small groups at Palmer – six week programs in which participants learn about the Living Compass wellness model and take small steps in particular areas of wellness they choose. This fall, four-session Wednesday night offerings included: Enhancing Your Well-Being with Spiritual Practices, Mindful Eating, and Aging Well. Palmer also offered a Living Well Through Advent 2017 mini-retreat, focused on Wonder, in early December.

For 2018, we hope to have parishioners take the self-assessment offered by Living Compass, beginning with the clergy, staff, and vestry. Wednesday night offerings this winter include: Building Healthy Relationships and Living Well in the Midst of Grief and Loss. Palmer has already ordered the Living Well Through Lent 2018 booklets, subtitled Loving With All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind (hint: Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day); there will be a retreat or series around the Lenten reflections. The Living Compass council also hopes to offer a wellness program or programs outside Palmer through collaboration with other churches and organizations.

The Rev. Liz Parker

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.

A consultant has helped us tune the amplifier and speakers in the nave so that we have better coverage than we have ever had.

We purchased an additional microphone for the ambo (pulpit) to have to have better coverage of both tall and short in stature readers.

A small computer and audio interface was donated so recordings of the choir, and in fact the entire service can be made on a routine basis. We are in need of volunteers to process these recordings.

Glenn Turner

Music at Palmer

2017 has been a robust and exciting year for the Palmer Choirs, which includes music making opportunities for pre-K to adult with Sacred Arts interns, staff singers, and parishioners of all ages. In August we celebrated the faithful service and dedication of Eric Murillo, our Director of Children's Choirs for over two years. Eric's energy and passion for music making encouraged the children's choirs to double in size during his tenure. This fall Eric's workload increased at Spring Branch ISD which made him unable to continue as leader of the children's choirs, but he remains an active member of the parish. We want to thank "Mr. Eric" for his service to the parish. We welcomed back former Director of Children's Music, Courtney Daniell-Knapp. Courtney is a master teacher and returns to us with 20+ years of service as an Episcopal Church musician and former vestry member. Courtney and Eric made the transition seamless and we are grateful for their collective gifts and heart for ministry!

August brought us a wonderful new Associate Organist, Grant Wareham. Grant is a senior at Rice University studying organ with Professor Ken Cowan, Palmer's Organist and Artist-in-Residence. Grant is quickly garnering national attention winning major prizes as a young concert artist. He comes to us from St. Thomas Episcopal (Meyerland), where he served as organ scholar for three years.

The music department has much to celebrate in addition to carrying out our leadership responsibilities in weekly worship. In August choir members sang for the inter-denominational Jerusalem Peace Builders' concert, which included Houston Gospel singer Vawn Gretta, a Jewish Rabbi and a Muslim Iman. Palmer continues the strong tradition of quarterly evensongs, a youth Matins service last winter, and the popular Advent Lessons and Carols. We enjoyed a moving Palm Sunday organ concert by Ken Cowan playing Dupré's *Le Chemin de la Croix* with choir member Carol Streatfield reading translations of Claudel's poetry. Recordings of our choirs and organist Ken Cowan have been featured on several NPR broadcasts throughout the church year.

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.

Dr. Brady Knapp, Director of Music

Outreach Ministries

The Palmer church family continues to serve others outside of the wall of Palmer church with events such as Serve Sunday, mission trips and Alternative Gift Market, as well as, year round engagement with the homeless and those establishing long term housing, local school children and those seeking medical treatment in Houston. The Outreach Council, made of outreach ministry leaders and other At Large members, provide guidance and direction for the work we do.

Several Palmer ladies engage in fellowship with women and their young children at New Hope Housing each month over a Blessed Breakfast, organized by Jennifer Vaughan. Star of Hope children at the new Reed Road campus are receiving school supplies thanks to a new year round donation collection envisioned by Joan and Fritz Glover. Students at Yellowstone Academy continued to be supported through mentoring and tutoring as well as snacks and supplies with the support of Barbara Hass. While Palmer did not receive a family through the Episcopal Migration Ministries and Interfaith Ministries in 2017, under the leadership of Frances Vonk, relationships continue to be maintained with families adopted over the last few years.

There were many changes in outreach leadership this year. With Rev. Alex Easley's new call, Kelly Williams stepped into the role of Serve Sunday coordinator. Hurricane Harvey had significant impact on our outreach approach and gave us opportunities to quickly respond to many who were affected with the floods. Rev. David Wantland arrived at Palmer to serve as our curate and stepped into the role of coordinating these efforts. And with the retirement of Rev. Linda Shelton, Abigail Follmar is now serving as Palmer's Outreach Coordinator.

Abigail Follmar, Outreach Coordinator

Palmer Medical Center Ministry

PMCM needs YOU! There are several Ministries at Palmer who reach out to aid and assist patients who are here from out-of-town for Texas Medical Center treatment. This ministry offers some of the best Palmer has to offer. In 2017 we helped patients find housing (Palmer Place Ministry), spiritual support (Stephen Ministry), prayers (Daughters of the King, Order of St. Luke), rides to stores and appointments (James Ministry), meals (Moms Helping Hands), Holy Communion (Eucharistic Visitors), and clergy contact. We met people with needs (transplants, cancer care, heart issues, pending serious surgery, etc.) who travelled here from as far away as Malawi, as well as several US states. How do we need you? Contact us if you know of a patient, family member, friend, etc. who is or will be in the Texas Medical Center from out-of-town. We can offer them assistance, a church home, and friendship!

Suzie Dennis, Palmer Medical Center Ministry Coordinator

Palmer Place Ministry

Our Palmer Place apartments continue to provide affordable and comfortable “homes away from home” for many Texas Medical Center patients and their families as they undergo treatment for an extended period of time. During 2017 we served 23 patients and their families with our six apartments by 18 dedicated and faithful volunteers.

Palmer Place is about more than just providing housing; we’re a ministry of compassionate volunteers with welcoming spirits who desire to reflect God’s love to our apartment guests and to be a reminder that they are not alone on their medical journey.

We visit our patients/families on a regular basis; we add them to our Palmer Church prayer list so that they are lifted in prayer every day; we invite them to worship with us on Wednesday evenings and/or Sunday mornings; we promptly address any maintenance issues in the apartments; we assist those who come without a vehicle to get out into the community if they are able; and we decorate the front doors of the apartments for various seasons and holidays.

Sandra Begalke, Palmer Place Coordinator

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. 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.” Our Community of Hope members stayed in touch with parishioners affected by Hurricane Harvey. 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 Mother’s Helping Hands has provided meals and more for the families of new babies. The Older Adults Ministry continued to address the needs of Palmer’s older members and is planning a host of educational opportunities for the upcoming year.

The Rev. Liz Parker

Rector’s Reception

This year the Evangelism Council decided to host a Rector’s Reception each month to welcome newcomers and to provide additional fellowship time for Palmers. The Receptions were held at the Sunday School hour on the third Sunday of the month from January through December (except when there was a scheduling conflict). Light fare was provided, there was no official program, and parishioners coming from the 9 AM service or going to the 11 AM service were encouraged to come, meet Palmer newcomers, and visit with each other. Attendance was about 50 people most months; however, there was lower attendance in the summer when there was just one service at 10 AM. Palmers always seem to enjoy food and fellowship and the Receptions provided both.

Betty Key

Sts. Mary and Martha Altar Guild

The purpose of Saints Mary and Martha Altar Guild is to prepare our church for services in a beautiful and orderly manner that will ensure a smooth running service.

Victor Lamas is the new Altar Guild Director. He replaced JR (Richard) Porter in July. We are thankful and appreciative for Richard’s leadership to this ministry. He will remain on the Guild and continue to assist with his team assignments. Currently, there are 30 members in our guild.

Our busy year started with some team members accepting an opportunity to visit and share information with the Christ Church Cathedral Altar Guild in the Bahamas this past spring. It was a great trip and opportunity to begin a valuable, friendly relationship with their guild members.

In September, a long time parishioner, friend, and former Altar Guild Director, Alma Catlin, died at the age of 102. She was a friend to many and greatly admired for all her efforts and contributions to the parish and guild. In her memory, the Guild purchased some linens for use in the Nave. Thanks to Altar Guild member - Adonica Aston for her donation of funds to purchase some additional altar linens.

Working quietly behind the scenes, our members perform sacred duties with a special love and respect for the symbols and sacraments of our faith and worship. It is a labor of love that we perform 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.

Victor Lamas

Serve Sunday

Parishioners of all ages participated in Palmer's second year of quarterly Serve Sundays. We were able to reach out beyond our community to serve our neighbors in Houston and beyond, including sending teams to Vita-Living, Plant-it-Forward, New Hope Housing, the Emergency Aid Coalition and many more. Harvey stormed in and cancelled our August Serve Sunday but left us with much to do in 2018. Each Serve Sunday includes projects throughout Houston and on Palmer's campus as well as a donation drive for a local organization. We encourage everyone to get involved, especially in joining an off-campus team to make new connections with people in our community. Our goal is 100% participation; there is a place for everyone to serve!

Kelly Williams

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. The 9:00 usher teams ended the year on a five week rotation due to 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 and also during the combined summer services.

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. 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. In 2017, Jeanine Baker and Betty Key served as facilitators and Linda Shelton served as clergy and trained facilitator. The groups are open to our larger community as a pastoral outreach of our parish. The Rev. Shelton 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 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.

Betty Key

Wedding Coordinators

For 2017, the wedding coordinators have been Ragna Case, Jeanine Baker, and Sondra Maxfield. For 2018, Denise Zwicker is joining our team. 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 sextons, and our Music Ministry. We would especially like to thank Victor Lamas and Linda Bracey (Altar Guild), Suzanne Miller (Acolytes), Allen Nunley and Lynsey Slavonic (Bell Ringers), Brady Knapp, Ken Cowan and Grant Wareham (Music Ministry), Dennis Kutach (flowers/catering) and Jimmy Parrales (Sextons) 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 5 wedding ceremonies performed at Palmer in 2017, (Rev. Parker - 2, Rev. Price – 1, Rev. Hall – 1, Rev. Miller– 1). There is currently 1 wedding on the calendar for 2018.

Ragna Case, Jeanine Baker, Sondra Maxfield, and Denise Zwicker

Women's Spirituality Group

The founding of the Women's Spirituality Group took place about 20 years ago with the help of our then female curate, the Rev. Mary Beth Conroy. The meeting was a success, as was the name, WSG.

Most of the women were recently retired professionals, anxious to spend time exploring our spirituality through study, discussion, and reading various theologians. We also spent time laughing, some time crying, praying and getting to know each other, as we tried to discern the path God would have us take in the new phase of our lives.

Every Advent we have a day retreat and potluck at a member's home, with a priest facilitating. In the Spring, we have a Lenten retreat at a nearby Retreat House overnight with a priest facilitating. Both are a time of prayer and study.

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. The Worship Council also orders lay vestments as needed; we have added a few this year.

Meetings are on an "as needed" basis and when held, typically are in the Chancery at 5:30 PM on the second Tuesday of the month. Meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend.

Linda Shelton has retired this year and David Wantland is now attending meetings. We thank David for his interest and valuable input.

Glenn Turner

Young Adults

Starting with a fall trip to the MFAH, Palmer Young Adults group has grown with each passing month. So far, we have focused on fellowship events like Tacos on the Patio, the MFAH trip, and a viewing of The Crown, but as the group grows, there is interest in service projects and other outreach opportunities. Right now, the Young Adults group has drawn a lot of newcomers to Palmer who are excited to be a part of this faith community. The Young Adult group draws an average of 10 people in their 20s and 30s each month.

The Rev. David Wantland

Youth Formation

Our curate and our youth minister both began work at Palmer in July of this year and got to work to provide consistent, activity-driven formation for Palmer's youth. In addition to a fall lock-in and the Lessons & Carols White Elephant Party, Davis led the youth group in weekly EYC gatherings on Sunday night. Sunday school continues to grow, with an average of 12-15 on a given Sunday. Davis and David look forward to a time change for EYC in 2018, with hopes that an afternoon meeting will better suit the active lives of Palmer youth. Perhaps the biggest event of the year was Palmer's participation in Missionpalooza, a summer mission trip with the diocese that took place in July. Missionpalooza was meaningful to those who went on the trip and signals the youth formation team's interest in getting Palmer more involved in diocesan youth formation events like Happening and Yes.

Davis Mathis and The Rev. David Wantland