

Year C, 7 Epiphany

February 24, 2019 – Annual Meeting

✠ In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

The Psalmist tells us to, “Put your trust in the Lord and do good.”¹

A couple of years ago our Kitchen Remodel Committee met with several architects as we began the work of planning for a major kitchen remodel project. I have (or, I should say, had) a somewhat narrow view of architects – workers hunched over their drafting boards, perched on stools, ruler and pencil in hand, drawing lines with arcs and numbers on the draft paper.

Our Kitchen Committee met with architects who specialize in working with churches and other religious organizations, and so they have a keen sense of the life of a church community. My impression of architects was shattered when one architect said: *your building is either advancing your mission... or a drain on it.* Those are the words of someone who knows about more than just the brick and mortar and plumbing of a church building. He knows what “Church” is about.

We do good things with what we have at St. Alban’s. We provide a *GREAT* meeting space to charitable organizations at a very low rate, or for free, depending on the circumstances of the organization. We do our best to be hospitable to our neighbors – we *are* the neighborhood church, after all – by providing an affordable hall for gatherings and celebrations.

We have been very good stewards of our property. The improvements and repairs we have made over the past couple of years speak for themselves, and we continue to make little tweaks and upgrades here and there. Our church campus and facility are in good shape. We give

¹ Psalm 37:3

an excellent first impression to visitors and guests. We have been very good to ourselves, and that's important.

Now would be a comfortable point in time to sit and rest and bask in the good things we've done here and relish what we've accomplished, but I'm reminded that Jesus rarely ever stopped. He might go away to a quiet place for a short while, but like the Energizer Bunny, he was constantly on the move, healing, teaching and showing us how to love.

Which brings me back to that architect's comment: *your building is either advancing your mission... or a drain on it.* We can either sit and glory in our beautiful church, or we can get up from our quiet place and get to work, because there is work to be done. I've used this statistic before, but it never fails to stun me. In 2018, 80% of the families served by the ACCA Child Development Center had an average yearly income of less than \$30,000. That's happening in a county where the poverty level for a family of four is \$47,000, and full-time child care costs between \$15,000 and \$18,000.

Without subsidies provided by the government, and ACCA, in our area over half a family's income could go to child care, and we haven't even begun to discuss affordable rent and the cost of food. The County's 2014 Needs Assessment found that – in Fairfax County, mind you – more than 23,000 children were living below poverty... 23,000 children... and if you think that situation has improved, if you think that number has gone down since 2014, I have to tell you, you are sadly mistaken.

This puts our Belvedere Elementary weekend backpack meal program, and our after-school meal program at Poe Middle School, in proper perspective. Those two outreach programs are more than “just nice things to do.” I was chatting with Penny Gross, our district supervisor, the other day, and she reminded me that many children eligible for free and reduced lunch at

school, sadly, find that the school lunch is their major meal for the day. Hopefully, you can see that there is great need in our community...in our own backyard. Belvedere Elementary is less than a mile from here. Children go hungry *less than a mile* from us right now. Hopefully you can see how important it is that we do more...how important it is that we love our neighbor as our self.

In the Annual Meeting which follows this service, you are going to hear about the preparatory work and planning that have gone into a proposed Capital Campaign to renovate our kitchen. I am excited about the prospect of creating a kitchen that will enable us give to the community from what God has so generously given us. With a kitchen that meets county and state health code requirements and regulations, we can open our doors in the morning to provide a hot breakfast for those same children and families who are living below the poverty level. And we can provide those children with an affordable, safe pre-school or day care experience, allowing their parents to do their best to earn a living for their families, knowing their children are well cared for. We can provide them a hot, healthy lunch, and then, at the end of the day, we can send the children off with a hot meal they'll enjoy along with their families, who will have come to know St. Alban's as a generous, giving, caring Christian community. They will know St. Alban's as a Christian community that makes a difference. They will know St. Alban's as a Christian community that touches lives. They will see and know that we are truly followers of Jesus.

65 years ago (almost to the day), those who founded St. Alban's had a vision and a dream of an Anglican, Christian community in Annandale. Today, *we* are that dream... and *we* must continue to carry out that dream – the dream of being Jesus in this community. In those 65

years, we have been so richly blessed. Like Jesus, our response to God's goodness can't help but be open arms of love. "Put your trust in the Lord and do good..."²

AMEN

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam

² Psalm 37:3