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Annual Report of the Rector
La Iglesia Anglicana San Pablo en San Miguel de Allende, A.R.
(St. Paul's Anglican Church)

January 29, 2017

2016 has been a very good year for St. Paul's. We have accomplished many important things that have strengthened our capacity to be a vital community of faith in San Miguel. It continues to be a pleasure to serve here at St. Paul's. Kathy and I enjoy you and living in San Miguel.

Administratively, we completed the process for designation as an Asociación Religiosa and completed the legally required separation of St. Paul's from Unidos Somos Familia, A.C. Unidos Somos Familia, A.C. is now solely the legal identity of Centro Infantil San Pablo. This separation was necessitated by legal requirements which direct that a religious organization cannot be an Asociación Civil in México, nor can a non-religious organization be a part of an Asociación Religiosa. As a new legal entity, we also had to establish new banking accounts in San Miguel, and this provided the opportunity to move our accounts from Banorte to Bancomer. This work has now been completed. We also transitioned to the new electronic process of reporting employee taxes with Hacienda. Our employees now have the necessary identity cards and bank cards so that each quincena, their pay is directly deposited into their accounts.

Of significant importance is that we now have an up-to-date record with Hacienda. We owe no funds, and, with the new electronic system, payments are made in full and on time.

We also had the financial books audited this year, and discovered that the accounts were a complete disaster, such that the accountants and auditors were not able to render a management letter or certification of our accounts as complete and accurate. These accounts were all under Unidos Somos Familia, A.C., and the accounts audited were for the years previous to the current accountants, Ernesto Barcenás Balderas and Noé Alan Rodríguez Pérez. In consultation with the auditor and accountants, the Unidos Somos Familia, A.C. board decided simply to close those books as of July 1, 2016, and proceed with new accounting to form a base line from July 1, 2016. The books will be audited in early 2018 for the period July 1, 2016 through December 31, 2017.

I want to be very clear that our new accountants, who have worked with us now for two years, as well as Miguel Rangel, our Parish Administrator, have done yeoman's service in straightening out our financial records and practices. We are blessed with a fine financial team that also includes Mary Beth Lawrence, the Treasurer of the Parish. Mary Beth took on this ministry in January 2016, with training and assistance from her predecessor, Elaine

Sells. The additional counsel of the Endowment Committee has also helped us with our portfolio at Ameriprise.

There remains to bring up-to-date signatories for our U.S. account and credit card with J. P. Morgan Chase bank. As you know, banking now has to be done in person. Therefore, this Spring, a group will be going to McAllen, TX on a field trip to Chase Bank there.

Our portfolio at Ameriprise will be receiving close scrutiny this year. We have not been entirely pleased with either the performance of our holdings or the service we have received from Ameriprise. The portfolio continues to hover at a value of approximately \$1.4m. More about this will be found in the Treasurer's report. This will be the work of the Endowment Committee and Vestry.

We have also continued the process of reviewing and updating our formats and platforms for communications. With the excellent work of Nancy Gardner, Mary Jane Miller, Marco Espinosa, Jeff Sells, Daniel Morgan, and Ruth Castro, our website is being renovated and will be soon launched. It is important also to thank Marco, Daniel and Stephen Clark for their faith work in recording the Sunday lessons and Sermons as well as special liturgies. These are posted on our web page and on our You Tube account. I continue to be surprised and delighted at the number of hits we get – sometimes well over 100. Daniel is also in the process of preparing short videos of the ministries of St. Paul's that will be a part of our web page. The one completed to date are excellent and will greatly enhance our webpage.

Our excellent staff of Pepe Bustamente, as Sacristán, Nancy Costillo Ontiveros as La Amor de Llaves, and Miguel Rangel as Parish Administrator continue to work well together and do a good job in each of their areas of responsibility. Be sure to thank them when you have a chance.

St. Paul's continues to be a major resource to people, groups, and organizations in San Miguel de Allende. It is no small thing that our building is used seven days a week most of the year. It is never less than five days a week. The range of users continues to be broad, ranging from our long-time 12-step groups, Play Readers, and Pro Musica to occasional users such as the Garden Club and the Mac Group. Not infrequently, we find ourselves pressed for space. Additionally, our medical equipment closet is a well-known and frequently used community resource for many in San Miguel de Allende.

St. Paul's ministries continue to be vibrant expressions of how we live our Baptismal Vows, through such groups as the Mattress Project, Prayer Shawls, and Choir. Additionally, we seek to care for one another through the Care Committee, Danny Fund, Vestry, Altar Guild, Servers, a new bell choir, using again, after many years, our hand bells. And there is also the good work of our Ushers, Altar Guild, and Flower Guild. I am very

grateful to all of you who participate in these various ministries within St. Paul's and as outreach from St. Paul's. Please also know that there is no such thing as "too many participants". All of these ministries are always open to anyone who is interested. If you are unsure whom to contact, ask me. They provide both a time of working together and good fellowship.

Xavier Hernández and Ramiro Granados have worked diligently to provide musical support for our liturgies. As in any small parish, we do not have a cathedral music program. We do have a faithful core of folk who are augmented throughout the year by visitors and seasonal members, as well as other guests such as the choirs led by both Xavier and Ramiro. The additional support of gifts from parishioners allows us, from time to time, to have guest artists and special music. For these gifts and their donors, many thanks. And, as already indicated, Pastor Karen O'Malia has formed a bell choir, which debuted at Christmas. We look forward to hearing from the bell choir again at Easter. Thank you, Karen and bell ringers.

I also thank Sunni Putnam and her cohorts who this year, took on the ministry of overseeing our special occasions and celebrations, especially on Sundays at Coffee Hour. We have eaten very well on delicious refreshments provided by Sunni and her workmates. Certainly we all appreciate the generosity and work they have done. Thank you. Additionally, Christine Eyre and her team, as well as many parishioners, provided us with another superb U.S. Thanksgiving Day dinner. We had a full house and a good time was had by all. Many thanks to all who made this meal possible.

And while I am on the topic of food, many thanks to all of you who have volunteered to do Coffee Hour after the 10.30 Eucharist. Your contributions, both elaborate and simple, to our Sundays support an important time of fellowship for parishioners and visitors.

Our thanks also to those who have chaired committees and guilds this year. These various chairs and groups make sure that we have ushers for liturgies, someone to call when there is a need or emergency, and care is needed. My thanks to Susan Robinson, Isobella Kreizel, Adrian Ross, Ken McCutchen Vaun, Christine Eyre, and to Bonnie Eriksmoen who takes care of the Danny Fund.

With the enthusiasm of Valarie Coon and Lynn Ramsey, and assistance from others, we reinstated Game Night on the last Friday of each month. Game night is a time for a little food, a little wine, a little play, and a lot of fun. It is a time intended to build community among parishioners over a good game of Mexican Train, cribbage, Uno, or Rummikub, among other games.

An essential part of our outreach continues to be Centro Infantil San Pablo (CISP), Feed the Hungry, and, as of 2016, Rural Education Institute. Members of the parish are

involved in all three of these organizations. I serve on the Board of CISP and Rural Education, and on the Advisory Board of Feed the Hungry. These NGOs continue to be a vital part of educational and nutritional work in San Miguel and the surrounding campo. I also continue to serve on the Board of Patronato pro Niños. Additionally, the participation of St. Paul's members in these and many other organizations also constitutes a vital part of the life and ministry of St. Paul's in San Miguel. We need to remember that all we do to live out our Baptismal Vows is a part of the presence and ministries of St. Paul's, even when not an explicit project of St. Paul's.

Participation in liturgy on Sunday is an essential part of our life together. We ended the year, statistically speaking, with an average Sunday attendance of 85.4. I thank you for your faithfulness on Sundays. Christmas this year was remarkably full both for Carols and Christmas Eve Eucharist. Allowing for overlap between the two events, we probably had close to 200 people. Christmas Day, even though a Sunday, was fairly normal in attendance. Going forward, where we need to do a bit of work is with special liturgies, many of which fall on week days, and are annual events. I think of our Remembrance Day observance, Lessons and Carols, Ash Wednesday, Stations of the Cross on Fridays during Lent, and the Holy Week liturgies that culminate in the Great Vigil of Easter on Easter Eve. There is also among us a faithful core of people who pray Morning Prayer at 9.15 a.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday. Wednesday is Eucharist. Thursday is an open day for quiet meditation, prayer, and reflection. These are all opportunities to tend our hearts, souls, and minds, to prepare ourselves for the major events in the Church Year, and to grow spiritually. I invite and urge you to participate more frequently and fully in our liturgical life which is the gathering of God's people in this place for prayer and worship as a community of faith.

Our spiritual life also has been fed this year with Bible study on Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m. for one hour. Attendance has ranged from 5 - 12, depending on the season. Saturday Bible study is on hiatus for now. The Bible study format is to work our way through a biblical book together, with conversation and teaching, all at a leisurely pace. So, we tend to have a combination of attention to a text, questions, exploration of how to engage and interpret a biblical text, random thoughts, and deep discussion – as well as good fellowship.

Canon John White CVO was with us in November. For 2016, he led us through a consideration of "The One and the Many: How shall we live with Diversity?" As always, his presentations were excellent and thought-provoking. We changed the format to one day with two presentations and discussion, and found that this worked much better. We had 32 people for the day. My thanks to all who participated, and especially to the Vestry, Valarie and Michael Coon, and Lynn Ramsey who provided a wonderful Vestry dinner with Canon White and lovely accommodations. I anticipate that Canon White will be with us again this November, with a like format.

Going forward into the Spring, there are three opportunities for intellectual stimulation and spiritual formation. Coming in a few days, Andrew Fletcher will be with us for three presentations, one each on February 9, 10, and 11, from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.. We look forward to his insights and understandings of physics, of God, and of the relationship between the two and how that really does matter for us. I hope many of you will be here for “Life, the Universe, and Everything” with Andrew Fletcher. My thanks to Jeff and Elaine Sells who have facilitated his being with us after hearing him on their last cruise. These presentations are open to the public and you are encouraged to invite your friends.

During Lent, on Tuesday mornings from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. there will be an opportunity to watch together the series with Morgan Freeman, *The Story of God*. We shall watch an episode and then have conversation about it. It is an interesting series that will evoke reflection, questions, and hopefully stimulate some lively discussion. There are four episodes. We begin on March 4. The series will end with a fifth session on April 4 that I am calling “The Story of God in Holy Week”.

The third series will use the A&E series, *The Rise of Christianity*. The series begins in the first century and concludes in the modern period. Sessions will be on Thursday, beginning April 27 and concluding on May 25, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The format will be to watch a section together and then have conversation about what we have seen. I think this will refresh our own sense of the arc of Christianity through history and provide insights for a lively discussion.

As with the Fletcher series, these two offerings are open to the public, and you are encouraged to bring a friend.

The Vestry has been hard at work this year. We have had an excellent Vestry and Officers. I must express my great gratitude especially to the Senior Warden, Isobella Kreizel, Junior Warden, Bud Lawrence, Treasurer, Mary Beth Lawrence, and Clerk of the Vestry, Valarie Coon. We bid farewell to Isobella and Bud, whose terms end, and our By-laws require that they take a year off. Lourdes Medal completes a one-year unexpired term, and is nominated to serve a full three-year term.

Our Junior Warden, Bud Lawrence, has continued to oversee the work of getting our building in good shape so that it can be better and more easily maintained. The work has included tree trimming, electrical work, plumbing, roof and skylights, and painting the outside of the building, new sliding doors for the Sacristy cabinet, and new locks and keys for our doors. We have also had work done on the sound system, which we mightily hope resolves the perpetual problem of hearing during the liturgy. The major building projects we need to address at this point are to refinish the floors throughout the facility and to paint the worship space and the rooms in the parish hall. We continue to be grateful to the Archibalds for their support of the front gardens and for Pepe’s work to keep all of our garden areas well-cared for and watered. I am also very pleased that Bud has accepted my

invitation to be “Clerk of the Works,” or in the English phrase, “Estate Manager” for us. Bud knows our building better than anyone, and brings the knowledge and skill to assist us to maintain our buildings properly. He will be working with our new Junior Warden, Valarie Coon.

To give you a brief overview of the work before us this year, it seems to me that we begin with two principal, over-arching foci: The first is to address something that naturally happens in all organizations and parishes. When things are moving along in a pretty steady, comfortable manner, and when most everyone settles in to a routine that is known and comfortable, over time the organization or parish slides almost imperceptibly into taking for granted what their purpose or mission is and that it is perfectly clear to everyone. At some point, there begins to emerge a sense that the purpose or mission is no longer clear and known and understood by everyone. We begin just to drift along, something like a raft on a river. Peter Steinke, a well-known Lutheran congregational development consultant, calls this experience “mission drift.”

It seems to me that we are experiencing this drift as a parish and need to spend some prayerful, thoughtful time renewing, or refocusing, or recreating, or creating anew who we are, what we do, and why. Let me emphasize that mission drift is a normal, natural part of the life of an organization or parish. It does not mean that there is a problem or that something is wrong. It means that it is time for a tune-up. What are the indicators of this that I see? Other than the level of participation on Sundays, programs in the parish are not well-attended. The single exception in 2016 was the Canon White lectures. Special liturgies or days of observance other than Sunday are not well-attended. The Vestry has struggled with making substantial decisions and working with nimbleness. The work of the parish seems to fall under the rubric that 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people. There is anxiety about the future of the parish, often expressed in terms of a need for growth and/or for younger families with children.

The question, then, is one of clarification and renewal. The Vestry and I will begin our part of the work with our Annual Retreat next month. In due course, there will be parish conversations that will be an essential part of this opportunity for rejuvenation and refocusing. It will be work, and it will be stimulating, exciting, and, I hope, fun. So we begin by asking, “Who are we?” and “What is our purpose?” and developing strong, clear, actionable responses.

The second focus will be, “How do we build forward from here?” It is the opportunity to transform our renewed clarity of identity and purpose into concrete actions and ministries. This is the part where we look carefully and thoughtfully at ourselves in order to explore and to determine: What do we want more of that we are doing now? What do we want or need to let go of? What do we want to create? What are the next first steps to get from here to where we believe God is calling us to go to do what God is giving us to do?

In the context of what I see as the over-arching foci, two specific areas for exploration is parish growth and physical plant development. Exploration here means exploration. The fundamental theological framework for this exploration are the questions: “To what is call calling us?” How shall we get there in ways that strengthen this community of faith in living its Baptismal Vows in San Miguel de Allende?” The fiduciary question may be put this way: “How do we best allocate and use the resources we have in love and service to God in fulfillment of our Baptismal Vows?” This is a question of stewardship.

The Vestry and I have been aware for some time that our building is functionally full. “Functionally full” has two meanings here. As a matter of space, the term means we are as full as is comfortable for people. Architects tell us that a room that seats 100 is functionally full at around 75 - 80 people. On most Sundays, the nave is functionally full. Secondly, we are full at the level of the number and configuration of our spaces. It is very difficult to have more than one activity in the facility at a time, and often it is impossible. Noise flows readily between our nave and Parish Hall, which makes it very difficult, at best, to have something going on simultaneously in each space. There is not adequate space for Christian formation. We cannot develop a more fulsome children’s program on Sunday because we simply do not have the space. This means that parents with children are not inclined to come, or if they do, to stay, if formation for their children is important.

The Vestry and I have identified three types of spaces that need to be addressed: program space, clergy housing (rectory), and administrative office space. Recently, two possibilities have presented themselves to the Vestry for consideration. Bud Lawrence has been very helpful in drawing schematics of how these pieces might be configured. One possibility at this point is off the table, and the other may be considered further by the Vestry. When we have an appropriately developed plan, the Vestry and I will present it to the congregation for responses. I anticipate that we shall canvass the congregation for input and questions. Then the Vestry will make its decision about what to do.

In any case, the Vestry and I want you to know that we are exploring possibilities. Briefly, the driver, as it were, is insufficient program space. Within the restrictions imposed upon us by law regarding what we can and cannot do to develop our current space, there are possibilities within the current property through which we can address program and administrative office space. Clergy housing would continue to be an issue. While the current arrangement works well for Kathy and me, it would be difficult for a family with children and there is no parking. Rents are increasing sharply in San Miguel, as is the cost of purchasing property. Long-term rentals are also becoming scarce as the market makes a major shift to a short-term rental market. Our retiring and incoming Sr. Wardens have more details. It is likely that we shall call a Special Parish Meeting for a fuller conversation soon. The question before us may be put this way: In what ways is our physical plant an asset for the life and work to which God is calling us and in what ways does it hinder or

prevent our responses to God's call? So, you can see it is going to be a busy year with substantive work for us all.

There are many things on the horizon for us, rich possibilities, opportunities for creativity, a chance to explore, evaluate and renew ourselves, our identity as a parish, and our ministries in and through this parish. This is an exciting time. Naming mission drift is an invitation from God for deepening and revitalizing who we are for and with God in San Miguel. It is the opening of a door into a new chapter of the holy adventure that begins with our Baptism. I am looking forward to the work we shall do together this year as we seek to love and serve the Lord in our responses to and participation in God's mission.

+ *William*

The Right Reverend William O. Gregg, PhD
VI Bishop of Eastern Oregon, resigned
Rector

January 29, 2017