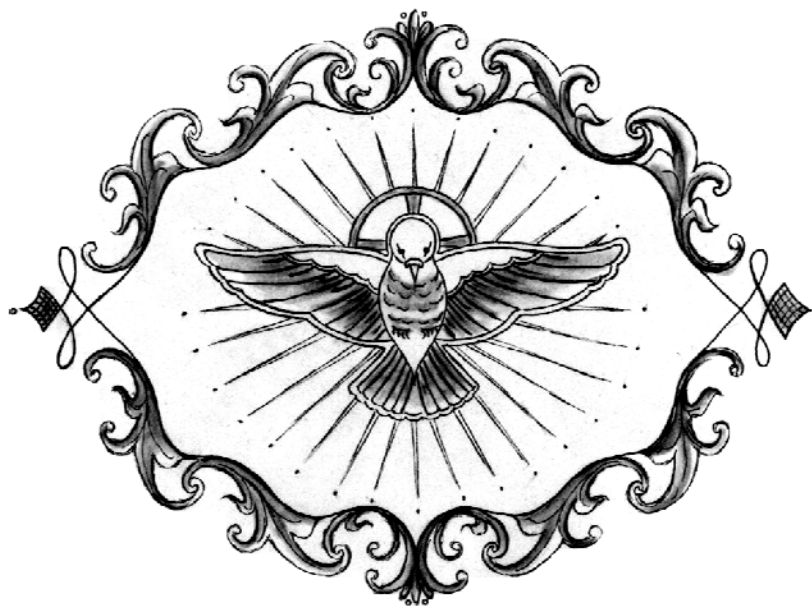


The 109th Annual
Meeting of the Parish

2011 ANNUAL REPORT



CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER
Kenilworth, Illinois

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
January 29, 2012
10:00 a.m. in the Great Hall

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RECTOR'S REPORT

Q. What is the Church?

A. The Church is the community of the New Covenant.

Q. What is the mission of the Church?

A. The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Q. How does the Church pursue its mission?

A. The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.

Q. Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?

A. The Church carries out its missions through the ministry of all its members.

From *The Catechism, The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 854-855

Fairly dry stuff, on first glance: rather prosaic and basic.

And yet. And yet, this excerpt from the Catechism found toward the back of The Book of Common Prayer reminds us of our primary calling as the people of God known as the Church of the Holy Comforter: to restore all people to union with God and each other through prayer and worship, living the Good News of Jesus in word and deed, and striving for the justice and peace that can only come through God's love. Such a vocation is the lifelong endeavor to which all baptized people are called; and such a vocation is the calling of this parish family.

As we gather for our Annual Parish Meeting, we do so grateful for, and enlivened by, all the gifts God has showered upon this church. The Annual Meeting is a time to reflect on the directions our response to God's call has led us in the last year, and to ponder where God might be nudging or pulling or beckoning us in the year and years to come. We can, if we are not careful, focus overmuch on numbers, specifics, and particulars, rejoicing where such information looks good and "successful," and fretting over those areas where it does not. But to focus on statistics and figures—as instructive as they can be—is to miss the larger picture: namely, the question of how we are responding to the challenge laid out in the Catechism printed above, and how we are individually and collectively using the gifts God has bestowed upon each of us and upon all of us.

It has been a rich and rewarding year. 2011 was, as we all know, a unique time in the history of Holy Comforter. For only the fourth time in 89 years, a Rector retired, in this case a beloved, faithful, and wise priest who had served this fortunate community in one fashion or another for 36 years. A new Rector arrived the very next day, a little rounder and balder than he was when he left the parish nearly 20 years earlier. And along the way, new ministries have unfolded; lives have been touched and changed through the ministry of this parish; signs of vitality and vigor are all around. Families and individuals have been welcomed into the community of faith, and those wounded in spirit and body have been consoled and strengthened. God's love and presence have been celebrated in festive gatherings and solemn liturgies, in provocative educational opportunities and choir practices. The Good News has been proclaimed and lived both inside and outside the church's buildings. New friends have joined the Body through baptism, and old friends have been committed to God's embrace. Movie nights and bowling and baptisms, Housewalk and house blessings and hospital visits, nursing home Eucharists and carols sings, Shawl Ministry and SoulJourners and Lenten dinners and mission trips, pageants and

Evensongs, Stephen Ministers and GreenHouse: in all these ministries and events, and in so many more, have we sought to glorify God and to be the “community of the New Covenant.” We have much in which to rejoice, and can, I pray, look forward to a faithful and lively year ahead. But, rather than offer here a summary of everything that has taken place at and through Holy Comforter, I invite you to read carefully the reports and reflections that follow, that you might encounter, from the parish leaders themselves, the sort of mission and ministry that has been offered by this parish in 2011.

And I invite you to remember that, when all is said and done, a church is people: that a church is only as lively and healthy as its own members make it, graced by the Spirit. It is people, called together and sustained by God, who cause a church to fulfill “its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.” In this regard, we are especially blessed. Many of the people who make Holy Comforter the unique and stimulating place it is are profiled or mentioned in the reports that follow. But I would be remiss if I did not mention some particular individuals. We have enjoyed and grown from the leadership provided the last three years by our retiring Vestry members Andy Knott and Charlie Wise, each of whom, in his own way, has provided insight, leadership, and invaluable service to our larger family of faith, and each of whom has been graciously flexible in responding to the needs of the congregation. The presence on the Vestry of these devoted people will be missed by the remaining members of that body and by the entire parish, even as we know that they will continue to exercise their ministries among us in creative ways. And it is impossible to articulate how fortunate Holy Comforter has been the past three years to have had Jon Bunge as our Senior Warden. I am struck, again and again, by how consistently God provides just the right person at just the right time, and Jon—who generously agreed to serve a third year as Senior Warden following the sad news that Sam Schaefer and his family would be moving to Boston—is a living manifestation of this truth; for he has ever been a marvelous Warden, full of zeal, energy, and vision. Speaking personally, I will miss his presence and wise counsel more than he knows, and am confident that the rest of the Vestry and parish share in my gratitude for all he has done for, and been to, Holy Comforter these past several years. We are truly fortunate to have been led and served by these marvelous people the past several years. And I would be remiss if I did not also thank, on behalf of the entire parish, our rising Senior Warden, Bob Patin, Treasurer Art Duquette, Chancellor Tom Hamilton, and Vestry Clerk Connie Layton, and all of the other members of the Vestry, Josh Newsome, Eric Beatty, Courtney VandeVelde, Cindy Macfarland, Ann Pearce, Doug Groncki, and Sarah Crawford, for all their dedication and wisdom.

I am also grateful, as I know you are, for the gifts and dedication of the members of our staff, and for their commitment to our ministry. Chris Hardman, Heath Howe, George Hull, Patti Pateros, Jeff Wiszowaty, Mary Johnson, Derek Nickels, Mary Jeffers, Jose Garcia, and Javier Delgado create the most talented, creative staff imaginable, and to be their colleague is a privilege and an honor.

On a personal note, I want to thank Lili Duquette, Steve Crawford, and all the members of the Succession Committee for their energy, devotion, and guidance during the time of discernment and transition as Holy Comforter prepared for Fr. Myers’ retirement and the arrival of the Parkin family. And I want to express the deepest gratitude for the warm, loving way in which the entire parish has welcomed Jan, our children and me back into the incomparable embrace of the Holy Comforter community.

So a church is its people, plain and simple: people like those mentioned above, and those mentioned below, and so many others. And where will we go in the year ahead? How will God use us for God's will and work, purpose and plan? What new adventures, challenges, trials, and delights await us as we journey forward in faith? How can each of us serve God's holy realm with our own gifts? The answers will unfold as we move forward. But two things are certain: God has provided us with the gifts we need to do the work God has given us to do; and the power behind is greater than any challenge ahead of us. May we, in this year, be open to the new things God would do among us. May we not shy away from the unknown, the untried, the uncertain. May we ever more fully use the charisms God has supplied. And may God bless and strengthen us all, this year, and always.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Dr. Jason L. Parkin, Rector

THE WARDEN'S REPORT

The highlight of the past year has been the critical step the Parish has taken to position itself for a successful and vibrant future: welcoming Father Parkin as the Parish's ninth Rector together with his wife Jan and their children. A transition from one Rector to another can be a difficult period for a Parish, but our Parish has made the transition seamlessly. We have welcomed seventeen new families during the past year. The Parish continues to thrive financially and otherwise and continues to play a significant role in its members' lives. The success of this transition is a testament to Father Parkin's extraordinary talent as a priest and his whole-hearted commitment to our Parish, which he served as a younger priest a number of years ago and now will hopefully lead many years into the future. We are all lucky to have him back and blessed through his presence and leadership at Holy Comforter.

As in past years, the Parish and its Vestry have attempted during 2011 to improve and adapt the Parish's programs to keep the Parish central to the life of its members and to expand the reach of our Parish to other persons. Numerous examples are detailed in the various reports included in this booklet such as

- the alternative services held throughout the year;
- the new curriculum being offered in the Parish School;
- the new programs being offered for 6th and 7th graders (iConnect), 8th graders (AIM), as well as the thriving high school WHAM program;
- the Parish's expanding outreach programs;
- the new adult formation opportunities; and
- the liturgical changes that have been implemented throughout the year.

The challenge for the Parish is to respect its traditions which we all deeply honor while at the same time working to adapt the Parish to a changing world and the changing needs of its parishioners. Under Father Parkin's leadership, the Parish will succeed in this goal in the years to come.

On behalf of the Vestry, we want to thank the members who are leaving the Vestry this year: Andy Knott (Operations) and Charlie Wise (Liturgy & Music). Andy and Charlie have each worked hard on behalf of the Parish and their presence on the Vestry will be very much missed. Please thank them for their service when you see them. We also want to thank the Clergy and the Parish Staff. To say that we have a dedicated and hardworking Clergy and Staff is like saying that Father Parkin has a somewhat audible singing voice. We have a Clergy dream team in the Revs. Parkin, Hardman, Howe, and Hull. We are also very grateful for the exceptional work of Patti, Mary, Derek, Jeff, Javier, Jose, and Mary.

The Parish is healthy and strong and will continue to be so with God's help. We look forward to 2012 and extend our best wishes to the Parish and all of you for the year to come.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jon Bunge, Senior Warden
Bob Patin, Junior Warden

ADULT FORMATION REPORT

This past year Holy Comforter has increased its Christian Formation opportunities. Several offerings continue. Under the leadership of Nancy Lovely, SoulJourners offers an opportunity for people to grow in their relationship with God and become part of a community of spiritual friends. GreenHouse, under the leadership of Barbara Haljun, Pam Martin, Chris Wiedrich, and Sandy Boles offered meaningful times of reflection that bring us closer to God and each other. The Men's Saturday Morning Bible Study, overseen by Alec Dike, still meets every week to study the Sunday scripture lessons while building a community of respect and support.

Twelve Stephen Ministers were trained and commissioned this past spring. They received 50 hours of training and instruction and are now making a "pastoral difference" in our community. In addition, Father Parkin led an Adult Inquirers' Class, helping those who attended to be introduced to or renewed in our Anglican/Episcopal identity.

I have continued the weekly formation class that Fr. Myers began years ago. In the winter and spring of this past year we met on Thursday afternoons to study the Book of Revelation, its meaning and its effect on our culture. In the summer I offered a new Wednesday morning class entitled *The Spiritual Life: an Experience in Prayer*. Because of the good response to this offering, we switched our weekly formation class to Wednesday morning. This fall we began a *Spirituality in Practice* series where we first looked at some of the Wisdom literature in the Bible especially Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Then we began to look at our different personality types, helping each other to identify the portion of scriptures that speak most clearly to us and the types of prayer that best suite our personalities. These two studies were preparatory for our present series on Benedictine and Celtic Spirituality.

Forum hour has also been a time for Christian formation. In the spring we finished a very timely and very successful series on hospitality put together by Patti Pateros. This was formulated not only because Father Parkin was soon to arrive, but because during any time of transition hospitality is the key to maintaining vitality. Because transitions often carry anxiety and fear, I presented a Lenten series entitled "*Reel Spirituality II: What are we afraid of?*" This series used popular movies to help us address those things we are afraid of. This included some of my favorite horror movies, but more especially those more realistic movies that help us identify those things we really are afraid of: alienation, absorption, rejection, failure, intimacy, and death. And, of course, we also began to reveal God's *Way of Love* that helps us cast out all those fears.

Our worship services remain one of our strongest formation opportunities. Unlike most parishes, Holy Comforter offers a service of Holy Eucharist every day. In addition, we held three alternative services that helped us get out of our comfort zone and think about the future. We held a *Blues Mass* on the first Sunday of Lent with the help of a Delta Blues Band led by Jimmy Burns. At that service we had an opportunity to "truck our blues away." At our parish picnic we recognized our veterans and celebrated with the Bill Porter Band. Then in August we held a *The Times They Are a Changin'* Mass with the music of Bob Dylan offered by the band, Blood on the Tracks. This service kicked off a new forum hour series focused on the many changes that the church and the world are going through in our present time.

I want to thank Father Parkin and all the staff for their ongoing help. And, I would like to thank the whole parish for its support of these Christian Formation opportunities.

Respectfully Submitted

The Rev. Chris Hardman, Associate Rector

FAMILY MINISTRY REPORT

Church of the Holy Comforter chose to embrace our commitment to families and their faith formation with a specific focus on Family Ministry in July of 2011. This ministry began with the call of a new staff member to work half-time in this important area. This role includes working directly with families, with the leaders and staff of All Things Bright and Beautiful and the Church School teachers to strengthen the overall ministry of the parish. The long-term goal of this ministry is to help the parish intentionally create a sacred space where children and families can come to know and love Christ in a way that informs how they live their lives within and outside the church walls. The intended result of this is to establish stronger connections between, and integration of, the various ways in which we seek to nurture families and our younger brothers and sisters in faith. Still very much in the “mustard seed” stage, this ministry has begun to realize this hope in a variety of ways.

We introduced the concept of the four keys for nurturing our faith. Influenced by Vibrant Faith Ministries, the four keys are: a) Caring Conversations, b) Rituals and Traditions, c) Family Devotions/Prayer, and d) Family Service. Believing that faith is not only taught on Sunday morning in a church building but also through how we live our lives at home and in the world around us, these keys were explained and offered for use through monthly table blessings, monthly newsletter articles, and various “take home” activities.

In addition, two adult forum options were offered on Sunday mornings to highlight two of the four keys, provide a means for fellowship among families, and stimulate awareness around making our faith known and realized outside of CHC. Early in the fall a member of Erika’s Lighthouse facilitated a conversation on bullying, and families were encouraged to have a Caring Conversation with their child around the topic at home. Additionally, a session on Advent rituals and traditions was offered as a tool that could be used in conversation and practice in our homes.

Faith Boxes and Baptismal Teams were introduced. Each Baptismal Teams provides Christ-like hospitality to the newly baptized and their families. Knowing that baptism can be an introduction to a faith community for a family, we provide a team of people at this important moment to welcome them and answer questions for them about parish life. This is an intentional way of emphasizing how much CHC values families. The Faith Boxes are a tool that families can take home and use to practice the four keys. The boxes are full of gifts and trinkets which provide a means for a caring conversation about Christian faith. Opening the box and lighting the baptismal candle on the anniversary of the child’s baptism provides a tool for a new family ritual or tradition. Re-reading the notes inside the box serves as a reminder of the support of the wider Christian community.

Significant time has been spent working with Mary Johnson and Sarah Crawford creating and implementing a new curriculum for our Church School and Children’s Chapel. This curriculum includes solid attention to some of the great stories of the Bible, the sacraments and the importance of our involvement in outreach and service. Also, restructuring Children’s Chapel and providing occasional take home material were part of the reorganization for the Church School.

Finally, creating the role of chaplain to All Thing Bright and Beautiful has significantly begun to help integrate the various ways we at Holy Comforter minister to families beyond Sunday morning. This included such things as attending the annual pumpkin carving, offering weekly chapel to the junior kindergarteners in our sanctuary, creating and facilitating an opening ritual and recognition for the spiritual work of the ATB&B staff at beginning of year, assigning staff prayer partners and offering monthly email reflections.

The past five months have been a real joy. I look forward to all that 2012 has to bring the families of Holy Comforter and those whom we serve.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Heath Howe, Family Ministry Associate

PASTORAL CARE REPORT

Church of the Holy Comforter has a long tradition of reaching out to any member of our parish family who has a pastoral need. Each time we worship as a community of faith prayers are offered for them as well as those who provide for their care. Further we thank God for the precious gift of life and pray for those observing a birthday or wedding anniversary. Our parish forbears are remembered annually on the date of their death.

The clergy are available to respond whenever and however they can to individuals and families in need on either a short or long term basis. Carrying out this ministry may involve visits to hospitals, homes, healthcare facilities and local retirement communities. We consider it truly a privilege to walk with parishioners through life's joys, challenges and sorrows.

The clergy offer the sacrament on a monthly visit with those who are homebound. In addition, Lay Eucharistic Visitors attend a morning Eucharist and are sent forth with consecrated bread and wine which they take to the homebound. Ann Pearce and Marc Franson were commissioned last fall to join Elizabeth Andrews, Sue Murphy and Bill Haljun in providing this ministry.

The Lay Eucharistic Visitors also delivered poinsettia plants at Christmas and lilies at Easter to homebound parishioners. Notes of gratitude from recipients indicate they "simply loved" the Christmas cards our 6th and 7th grade youth had created to accompany their plant.

Our Thursday morning celebration of the Holy Eucharist includes a special litany for healing. Near the conclusion of the service Fr. Parkin invites those who wish to gather at the altar rail for anointing and the laying on of hands for healing.

On All Souls' Day we offer an evening service for our parish family to recall and celebrate the lives of loved ones who have died, especially during the past year. Worshippers are invited to light a candle in their memory and place it on the altar. A reception hosted by the Bereavement Ministry follows.

Resources for pastoral care were expanded last spring with the successful launching of the new Stephen Ministry at Holy Comforter. In addition devoted parishioners have enabled the continuance of the long standing Shawl Ministry, Special Needs Ministry and Bereavement Ministry. These are described in more detail later in the pages of this report.

Not to be overlooked is the informal care and compassion parishioners have expressed for one another in the course of our shared life as a community of faith.

It is personally fulfilling to serve as a member of our dedicated parish staff under the leadership of Fr. Parkin.

Respectfully submitted
The Rev. George Hull, Pastoral Care Associate

OPERATIONS REPORT

2011 began by preparing for our new Rector and his family. After 18 years of minimum attention, the rectory was thoroughly refurbished. Ceilings were repaired, walls patched and painted, floors refinished, carpeting replaced and the drapery updated. The kitchen and laundry room appliances were replaced and some minor roofing repair was done. Lastly, the dying and overgrown backyard shrubbery was refreshed and the collapsed fence replaced.

The Church and office buildings weathered the year well. Periodic maintenance painting on the south facing wall revealed decaying wooden eaves near the choir room, which were simply repaired, and the crumbling concrete and brick wall at the east entrance by the Great Hall was patched and tuck-pointed. The roof was inspected with no weak spots found. The plumbing is in good repair and the HVAC systems are well maintained. A recently installed air conditioning condenser was found to be defective and was replaced at no cost by the contractor. Father Parkin's office and the lower level Church school classrooms received a fresh coat of paint.

Respectfully submitted,
Andy Knott, Operations Coordinator

TREASURER'S REPORT

As all of you know, 2011 was another difficult year economically. But I am pleased with the financial results for the church under the circumstances. Our collection pledges came in throughout the year as expected. The staff pared costs when possible – without sacrificing the quality of our programs.

We finished the year very close to our budget, which will be rolled into the 2012 income. As in earlier years, we helped fund our budget by drawing from the interest on the endowment fund. We have not received all of the pledges for 2012 yet, but we expect to meet our pared back budget. We appreciate your positive response to our Canvass Campaign.

Thank you for your continued financial support of the parish and your generosity throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,
Art Duquette, Treasurer

EDUCATION REPORT

All Things Bright and Beautiful

The preschool, in its 17th year, has an enrollment of 156 students and a paid staff of 14 Early Childhood professionals. Of the 116 families in the school, 22% are also parishioners. The program consists of two Junior Kindergartens, 3 three-year old classes, 3 two-year old classes and 3 Mommy-and-Me classes. To meet increased demand, we are adding a new 3-Day, “young” 3-year-old program by connecting two classrooms on the 2nd floor which will also provide for better space for our Sunday Church School program. The tuition income from the preschool covers all direct costs, a 20% contribution of gross income to offset operating expenses incurred by the parish; and, realizes a positive balance at the end of the fiscal year.

This ministry continues to be a highly regarded early childhood program and a much sought after placement for children in the community. In the summer of 2011, ATB&B added a summer camp which was a huge success with 24 campers. With the assistance of Jan Parkin and the dedicated Staff, the campers worked in the garden and harvested many of the vegetables. The Bible camp that followed two weeks afterward was also popular, having doubled in size from the summer of 2010. Throughout the year, the annual pumpkin carving event and movie night remain popular events for families at ATB&B and the community.

Registration is currently underway for the 2012-2013 academic year and a full enrollment is expected at the conclusion of the registration process. The DCFS License, required by the State of Illinois, was renewed in 2010 and is in effect through 2013.

Church School

Our Christian Formation schedule is from 9:00 to 10:45 on Sunday mornings. There are two nurseries staffed by paid professionals that care for infants on the first floor and children ages 2 and 3 in the preschool classroom on the lower level. Junior Kindergarten through third grade meet on the second floor for Children’s Chapel and classroom lessons that include stories, education, crafts and songs. We updated the K-5 Church School curriculum divided into 3 sections: Fall, Winter and Spring, each with a different theme. We also formalized a structure where J/K and K are taught as a two year program; 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades as a three year program; and 4th and 5th grades into a two year program. This enables classes to be combined without missing any material as each year the same program is taught to the multiple grade levels. We have worked to integrate the church school into parish life and were very excited to have the children sing for the Baptism Liturgy and look forward to the next opportunity.

Attendance on Sunday mornings averages 45% (through December) of the names listed in our Church Windows membership directory. The Church School is staffed by 27 volunteer parents who rotate through a teaching schedule, three Chaplains and two musicians.

Youth Groups

iCONNECT is the newly formed 6th and 7th grade program which provides strategies for our young teens to better understand and strengthen their relationships with God, the earth, and one another. A new meeting room on the lower level was created for this group, encouraging them to take ownership of their program as well the space provided for them.

AIM [Actions in Motion] is now a program for our 8th graders, acknowledging this unique and important time in their growth and development. Their Sunday morning meetings focus on character building and discovering and using their gifts and talents.

Thirty-two 7th and 8th graders prepared for their Pentecost Sunday Confirmation last spring by participating in a new Episcopal program, “Confirm Not Conform.” Classes met weekly in the evenings throughout the year, culminating in the first junior high school mission trip. “Taking AIM: Chicago” was a 3-day local service project, working with organizations that reach out to those in need in the heart of the city. This mission trip is now an annual outreach event for our junior high school students.

WHAM [We Have A Mission] is the heart of the high school youth group and provides opportunities for global mission work while promoting spiritual growth and development. WHAM Sunday meetings are a time to unwind, to catch up with friends, and to support one another in a safe, relaxed atmosphere. There is a committed group of 23 high school students, with an average of 13 attending on any given Sunday . . . but they all show up for their occasional Sunday breakfast meetings at the Ridgeview Grill!

For the second time in parish history, 15 high school students traveled to Nicaragua in June 2011 for their annual mission trip, working with the Fabretto Children's Foundation. They worked hard and played harder, and came home feeling positive and excited about their new relationship with the children living in this rural community.

All youth groups meet on Sunday mornings from 10-10:45am in their dedicated lower level meeting rooms. Each group is fortunate to have a committed group of adult leaders who not only meet with them weekly, but also take time out of their busy lives to chaperone the mission trips. We extend our thanks to iCONNECT leaders Stephen Citari, Cricket Lind, JaLynne and Mac Butler; AIM leaders Janet Beatty, Leslie Groncki and Andy Knott; WHAM leaders Ann Barrett and Steve Crawford.

Adult Education

Opportunities for adult education occur on a regular basis as well as seasonally. The Saturday morning Men's Bible Study continues to draw a dedicated group of men of various ages to a study of the Sunday scripture. SoulJourners, designed to facilitate personal growth within the context of spiritual friends, has two small groups of women who meet monthly. GreenHouse offered women a time to nurture and grow a deeper sense of what it means to be spiritual and explore, reflect, share and pray in a grace-filled environment. Although GreenHouse no longer meets on a regular basis, the leaders provide special opportunities for formation, such as the overnight Women's Retreat held in October.

Father Parkin offered a 4-week Inquirers' class in the fall which provided a perfect introductory opportunity for those new to the Church, those returning to church, and those who simply wanted a refresher course.

Father Hardman's Wednesday morning “Spirituality in Practice” has developed a strong following, with an average weekly attendance of about 25. Discussions topics include the Bible, prayer and books on

spirituality. Father Hardman also led another successful Lenten study series featuring dinner and movies.

Sunday's Adult Forum continues to be the cornerstone of adult formation. The highlight of last spring's theme of Christian hospitality was the lay-led Lenten series which featured movies clips exemplifying hospitality and small group discussions and suggestions for personal reflection. Father Hardman, who oversees all adult education, has developed this year's theme, "Our Common Life: Practicing Spirituality," a shift from "learning about" God to "knowing" God.

The Adult Forum is an opportunity for Christian education and fellowship, a time to enrich our lives and faith, and connect with one another. It is held September–May at 10am in the Great Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Doug Groncki, Education Coordinator

FELLOWSHIP REPORT

Fellowship at Holy Comforter is the most comfortable means of establishing a Christian relationship with others. Most fellowship events are fun, multi-generational activities; some are geared to those with common interests; still others are a way to continue the celebration of a liturgy or begin a new season.

Family fellowship events such as the parish picnic, ice cream social, and Fall Festival continued to attract families with young children. Unfortunately the annual beach party was rained out, but that did not deter the fun when it was moved to the Great Hall. The parish picnic ends the parish's program year while the ice cream social kicks off the new year. An outdoor liturgy is incorporated into each of these events.

At our Oktober Fest Fall Fellowship Dinner, adult parishioners enjoyed German music provided by Der Musikmeisters, while dining on bratwurst and potato pancakes. This year's dinner was much more multi-generational than in previous years, and saw the return of fellowship houses for refreshments prior to the dinner.

The pancake supper, Agape meal and Lenten continental breakfasts provide ways of connecting with one another before and during the solemn season of Lent. Jan Parkin hosted the first Easter egg hunt on the parish grounds – and learned the hard way not to put the candy-filled eggs out too early! Because it seemed to conflict with the Christmas Pageant, it was decided to end the long-standing Advent tradition, the Living Crèche. However young and old gathered for home-made cookies and hot cocoa as they sang Christmas carols in the Great Hall, led by our very musically inclined Rector!

Four Baptism receptions and a big Confirmation party (complete with a DJ!) were also hosted by the Fellowship Committee, as well as the on-going Sunday morning coffee and donuts. St. Helen's Guild and Time for Women remain strong and active fellowship ministries which are open to all women of the parish.

Last spring, Holy Comforter hosted several fellowship events which reflected the changes that occurred in 2011. About 300 people – parishioners and friends of the parish – attended Father Myers' retirement party in May. Appropriately, it was held at Misericordia's Jean Marie Ryan Center, and was a wonderful tribute to our former Rector. To introduce our new Rector, eight Meet & Greets were held at various locations and times, from a noon lunch at J.P. Morgan's downtown office to a simple coffee in the church parlor. The Fellowship Committee was happy to work with the Succession Committee in helping the parish make a smooth transition of leadership, and in welcoming Father and Jan Parkin to our community.

It has been a busy and full year for the Fellowship Committee and we appreciate and thank those who help organize, participate in and enjoy the events and opportunities provided.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney VandeVelde, Fellowship Coordinator

LITURGY & MUSIC REPORT

2011 has been an exciting year as the arrival of Father Parkin as our new Rector has been accompanied by the introduction of some innovative new ideas as well as subtle “experimentation” with changes to our liturgy and music. The goal of these new ideas and practices has been to ensure that our worship experience continues to remain relevant and energetic in a rapidly changing world, while continuing to respect the core spirit and traditions of Holy Comforter and the broader Episcopal community that make our church such a special and cherished place.

Within the liturgy, the formats of the 8:00 (Rite One) and 11:15 (Rite Two) services have remained largely the same, while the 9:00 service has had the greatest amount of new ideas introduced. The Prayers of the People have been offered from within the congregation, so they are truly the Prayers of the People. Parishioners have been encouraged to choose whether to stand or kneel during prayers, and different formats for the Eucharistic Prayer, Confession and Absolution have been tested. Many of these changes have asked us to get out of our “comfort zone” and try new experiences in order to maintain a fresh perspective on the liturgy. For the most part, these changes have been viewed as positive and welcome. We expect to continue testing new ideas throughout this year and next, in a continued effort to respond to the needs of our ever-evolving Episcopal community.

Our music has evolved over the past year as well, with the most visible change being the shift of the full choir to the 11:15 service and the introduction of a number of our student parishioners to offer their musical talents with songs during the Offertory. Additional student performances are planned for the winter and spring. We have also experimented with using a piano rather than the organ for parts of the services, in order to allow for more contemporary songs to be sung during both the Offertory and the Communion. At the same time, our wonderful choir, led by our outstanding musical director Derek Nichols, continues to provide excellent and moving music for our weekly services as well as special choral services and selections during Christmas, Lent and Easter.

In addition, we have continued our recent tradition of periodic alternative services, based on particular musical themes/genres. The new service formats featured this year included:

Blues Mass – Held in March, this service featured the wonderful music of the Jimmy Burns Blues Band and was built around the theme of Blues music (particularly relevant for Chicago given its rich Blues tradition) and its message of both sadness and hope.

Dylan Mass – Held outdoors in August, this service featured the stirring music of Bob Dylan and was led by cover band Blood on the Tracks. The music offered the powerful message of transformative change and unity in Dylan’s music, and introduced the theme for our 2011-2012 formation.

These services were met with strong attendance and enthusiastic participation, which affirmed the interest of the parish in continuing to find new formats in which to worship. Some possible additions to the music and liturgy that we can expect in early 2012 include a Gospel Mass, featuring a local gospel choral group, and periodic singing performances by our 1st through 4th grade choir and musical offerings by older students, which are always welcomed by the parish. And this spring, the Vestry and Staff will be exploring the format and timing of a planned new regular service, likely outside of the Sunday

morning time, which will be specifically focused on attracting younger families and individuals who are not regular Sunday morning attendees, and designing a worship and fellowship experience that will be relevant, compelling and spiritually nourishing. We look forward to sharing ideas for this new worship experience and additional ideas with the Holy Comforter family and the broader community in the coming months.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Wise, Liturgy & Music Coordinator

NEWCOMERS REPORT

The Newcomers/Hospitality Ministry seeks to provide a warm, welcoming environment to all visitors and prospective members and to successfully integrate new members into our parish community. Our emphasis has been on presenting a broad cross section of who we are through an expanded Newcomers team, and on helping our newest members make connections within our community through events including a late summer cocktail party and various information sessions. Seventeen new families joined the parish in 2011, continuing the success we have had in being a place to live in love and faith with one another and share our abundance with our neighbors.

About one-third of our newcomer families are introduced to the parish through their participation in All Things Bright and Beautiful, many of whom follow up by becoming pledging members. Because of this, we have expanded our Hospitality Committee to include parishioners with children in ATB&B.

We continue with a tried and true newcomers' process which begins with a welcome letter from the Rector upon their initial visit; the delivery of a loaf of bread when a sincere interest has been expressed, follow up phone calls; and a personal invitations to meet for coffee or to attend a parish event.

Although this ministry plays a key role in helping to incorporate prospective and new members into the life of our parish, it is important that the entire parish offer a warm welcome to all who enter the doors of our Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Beatty, Newcomers Coordinator

MINISTRY REPORT

Altar Ministry - In Matthew's Gospel, when it is time for Jesus to celebrate the Passover meal on his way to the cross, he instructs his disciples to go into the city and find a certain man and tell him they will celebrate the Passover at his house. "So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover" (Matthew 26:19). Those disciples were the first altar guild.

Whenever there is a service at Holy Comforter, the Altar Guild is there to prepare Our Lord's Table, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. Whether it is a weekday Eucharist, Sunday service, or all of the beautiful services during the church year, members of the Altar Ministry are here, preparing the church. When it is time to veil the crosses for Lent or make Palm crosses, the Altar Guild is here. Membership in the Altar Ministry is open to all. Recognizing our busy schedules, members choose to serve on weekends, weekdays, or both, or only on a particular day of the week, whatever is most convenient. [Submitted by Altar Ministry Co-chairs Barbara Devlin, Nancy Seibold, Hal Stewart]

Bereavement Ministry – The Bereavement team, led by Pat Drew, continues to prepare beautiful and welcoming receptions for families and friends following memorial services and funerals, providing comfort and grace on behalf of grieving families.

Bridge Ministry – Emotional support and networking is available for those in need of employment or in a search process. This ministry, headed by Tom Hamilton, responds and evolves in times of need and remains a vital ministry in light of the economic times.

College Ministry – The College Ministry keeps young adult parishioners connected to the parish. Janet Batjer and Margaret Drake shop for small gifts to include in a package sent twice a year at Halloween and Valentine's Days. Included is a letter from the Clergy.

Flower Ministry – Week in and week out, the church altar and narthex are adorned with unique and distinctive flower arrangements—all designed and executed by a group of dedicated volunteers. They purchase and arrange flowers every week, make arrangements for the Children's Chapel, purchase and arrange displays for Special Occasions and Feasts, such as Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, and maintain the plants inside the church and in the outdoor urns. The weekly gatherings of teams of three provide a creative and prayerful ministry as well as fellowship as they combine their talents in arranging the beautiful flowers. The flower arrangements are given by parish members in memory of a loved one or celebration of an event. The Flower Ministry honors these intentions with their unique efforts. [Submitted by Flower Ministry Chair Jean Britt]

Lay Eucharistic Visitors – The LEV Ministry brings consecrated bread and wine to homebound parishioners. It is a wonderful connection to those not able to be with us as they have been in the past. Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies are also delivered through this ministry. Father Hull is the dedicated clergy liaison.

Ministry to the Clergy and Staff - Parish volunteers, led by Stephanie Sick continue to provide a monthly 'many thanks' luncheon for our exceptional clergy and staff.

Shawl Ministry – Multi-generational knitters meet on Monday afternoons in the library to knit prayer shawls and to make fleece blankets. The shawls are presented to parishioners, friends, and neighbors who are in need of comfort and support, are ill or grieving, have sustained a loss, or are going through transition, or for the birth or adoption of a baby. A member of the clergy blesses each piece before it is prayerfully sent on its way. Since Anne Heynen formed the Ministry in 2005, over 300 shawls and blankets have been presented to those in need. Until April 2011, the recipient of this outreach ministry has been Misericordia. In the coming year, other options will be researched.

This wonderful community works together to support all those who join, whether novice or experienced knitters, while providing caring fellowship. It is fun, full of laughter and great stories, while at the same time, reverent and humbling as a shawl is completed and passed around the circle of knitters.

Special Needs Ministry – Whether there is a new baby, surgery, illness or death, parishioners can count on support and help. This ministry is in place, ready to selflessly prepare and deliver meals for just a few days or for many weeks. The website “Lotsa Helping Hands” is being used as the tool for communication and notification to the list of parishioners who are ready and willing resources for this ministry lead by Julie Olson and Melissa David.

Stephen Ministry – Stephen Ministry is one way the parish fulfills the parish Vision: To be a community bound together in love and to be united in one Body and spirit.” Stephen Ministry is based on 1Peter 2:9: “The priesthood of all believers.”

Stephen Ministry is a confidential, one-to-one Christian, caring ministry by parishioners for parishioners. In March, thirteen parishioners completed their 50 hours of training and were commissioned as Stephen Ministers. They meet with their Care Receivers who are experiencing personal crises such as the loss of a loved one, divorce, serious illness, unemployment, and other life challenges. The Stephen Ministers meet two times a month for Continuing Education and Supervision. They make a significant commitment of time and service, supported by prayer and community.

Leadership and supervision are provided by the Stephen Leaders who have completed an intense Training Course and, in our parish have a background in clinical work: Fr. Chris Hardman, Jean Britt, Elizabeth Andrews, Dick Augspurgen, and Dick Morley. Continuing Education is provided by the parish clergy as well as speakers from community agencies and resources.

In this first full year of operation, Stephen Ministry has reached out to over 30 parishioners. In 2012, Sandy Boles will join the Leadership Team, and we will recruit for a new class in the fall, training parishioners to be God’s love in Action. [Submitted by Jean Britt, Coordinator]

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Pearce, Ministry Coordinator

OUTREACH MISSION

Seasonal Hands-On Outreach

Parish Community Service Project – 20 parishioners volunteered their time at the Good News Partners facility in Rogers Park. Tasks included painting and cleaning; the outreach committee provided funds to purchase, and ultimately donate, all supplies and lunch. This is the third year we have worked with Good News on this program and we have been fortunate that the November weather has cooperated each year. This multi-generational project provides a hands-on opportunity for our parish community to work with an organization which is one of the recipients of our annual outreach giving.

Thanksgiving Ministry – Five cars were packed full of food donations which were delivered to The Primo Center in Chicago. The donations, which included turkeys, fresh fruits and vegetables, napkins and paper dishes, were then distributed to neighborhood families for their Thanksgiving dinner.

Jesse Tree – This ministry provided Christmas gifts to families in transition through Connections for the Homeless. In addition, this year we collected gifts for the 4th and 5th grade students at Holy Family School in Chicago which were distributed by Santa Claus at their annual school Christmas party.

Easter Baskets – We once again filled 100 Easter (laundry) baskets with essential household and toiletry items. These baskets, gift wrapped and tied with bows and ribbons, were presented as Mother's Day gifts to the moms and their families served by Cathedral Shelter in Chicago's Lawndale neighborhood.

Diaper Drive – For the second year we celebrated Mother's Day by collecting diapers for parents at Connections for the Homeless. Five hundred diapers were collected this year.

Ongoing Hands-On Outreach

Good News Saturday Morning – This ministry, led by Jody and Bob Lapp, takes place on the first Saturday morning of every month. Several of our parishioners spend this time doing arts and crafts activities with the children at this Rogers Park facility. A new kitchen was recently installed at the facility, which now allows for cooking classes to also be offered to the youth who regularly attend this volunteer program.

A Just Harvest Community Kitchen – On the third Saturday of each month, our parish prepares food for and serves dinner to approximately 150 people at the Rogers Park Soup Kitchen. Many parishioners and their families have volunteered their time to shop for ingredients, cook, and serve dinner at the Soup Kitchen. It is a great, fun activity for singles as well as entire families. Alex Roever continues to coordinate this ministry to the community.

Misericordia – We continue our hands-on outreach relationship with this organization, which is home to 560 developmentally disabled children and adults. Parishioners have helped out in their laundry and in the bakery during the year. Last spring, parishioners manned a site in Winnetka for their annual Jelly Belly Candy Days.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Crawford, Outreach Mission Coordinator

OUTREACH RESOURCES

October 5, 2011 was the perfect day for our 58th Church of the Holy Comforter Housewalk and Boutique. We showcased four beautiful historical houses all within walking distance of the church, where we served elegant box lunches, held a bake sale, and offered a wide variety of items for sale in several boutiques. We sold 637 tickets, an increase of 72 from the previous year, and involved over 150 parish volunteers. We are happy to report the Housewalk netted \$31,000.

The funds from the Housewalk, along with donations from our Easter Thanksgiving, and Christmas offerings, support our outreach giving to both local and global agencies. This year we had \$84,500 for our outreach gifting. Of that amount \$73,524 was distributed to the following agencies:

- Fabretto Children`s Foundation \$15,000
- Father Ikenya \$2,000
- Global Alliance for Africa \$5,424
- Good News Saturday Morning \$500
- Messiah St. Bartholomew \$600
- Primo Center \$3,000
- Bishop Anderson House \$3,000
- Cathedral Shelter \$4,000
- Connections for the Homeless \$10,000
- Good News Partners \$10,000
- A Just Harvest \$10,000
- Lawrence Hall \$2,000
- Holy Family Ministries \$5,000
- St. Leonard`s \$3,000

The remaining \$10,976 has been reserved to make additional gifts to the above agencies for specific projects and/or to be used toward future and unexpected needs.

Respectively submitted,
Cindy Macfarland, Outreach Resources Coordinator

VESTRY & STAFF

2011 Vestry

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| The Rev. Dr. Jason L. Parkin | <i>Rector</i> |
| Jonathan Bunge (2012) | <i>Senior Warden</i> |
| Robert Patin (2013) | <i>Junior Warden</i> |
| Thomas Hamilton | <i>Chancellor</i> |
| Arthur Duquette | <i>Treasurer</i> |
| Constance Layton | <i>Clerk</i> |
| <i>Administration & Stewardship Advisory</i> | |
| Joshua Newsome (2013) | <i>Canvass</i> |
| Andy Knott (2012) | <i>Operation</i> |
| <i>Community Life Advisory</i> | |
| Douglas Groncki (2013) | <i>Education</i> |
| Courtney VandeVelde (2013) | <i>Fellowship</i> |
| Charlie Wise (2012) | <i>Liturgy & Music</i> |
| Eric Beatty (2012) | <i>Newcomers</i> |
| <i>Mission & Ministry Advisory</i> | |
| Ann Pearce (2014) | <i>Ministry</i> |
| Sarah Crawford (2014) | <i>Outreach Mission</i> |
| Cynthia Macfarland | <i>Outreach Resources</i> |

Staff

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| The Rev. Dr. Jason Parkin | <i>Rector</i> |
| The Rev. J. Christopher Hardman | <i>Associate Rector</i> |
| The Rev. Heath Howe | <i>Family Ministry Associate</i> |
| The Rev. George Hull | <i>Pastoral Associate</i> |
| Mary Johnson | <i>Director of Children's & Youth Ministries</i> |
| Patti Pateros | <i>Director of Community Services</i> |
| Derek Nickels | <i>Director of Music</i> |
| Jeffry Wiszowaty | <i>Operations Manager</i> |
| Mary Jeffers | <i>Parish Secretary</i> |
| Jose Nicholas Garcia | <i>Sexton</i> |
| Javier Delgado | <i>Sexton</i> |

2012 VESTRY BALLOT

Robert Patin
Senior Warden (2013)

Eric Beatty
Junior Warden (2012-2016)

Shannon Campitelli
Liturgy & Music (2012-2015)

Ned Hedley
Outreach Mission (2012-2015)

John MacLeod
Stewardship (2012-2015)