

Community of St. Ninian
Annual Report
November 3, 2017

This year has been a time of transition, as we move from our ministry of St. Ninian's Well to discerning our next steps as a Community.

We began 2017 with a retreat at which we shared times of worship, fellowship and discernment. We explored our history, our current interests, and ideas for the future. We value a caring community within ourselves, but feel a strong need to have a mission in the wider community. A strong vision did not emerge, but it was clear that we are still interested in hospitality and service to and with the LGBTQI community. Some follow-up assignments were made and there seemed to be an interest in refugee resettlement and we made an overture to Bridge Refugee Services, but almost immediately after that a major decrease in the number of refugees being allowed into the United States was announced and this initiative was put on hold as we waited to see the outcome of the new government policy.

In March, Rick Sawyer, one of our founding members, was severely injured when he was hit by a car while walking with his husband in Myrtle Beach. Their absence of many weeks had a serious impact on the Community. We held our regular meetings with a small number of participants and put our other activities on hold. A special healing service for Rick was well-attended with quite a few guests.

We did not participate in Pride or host any events for the wider community this year. We have missed these times of fellowship and outreach. We are planning a Christmas dinner in 2017.

Our benevolence funds for this year have not yet been sent, but will be sent before the end of the year. We have said that we would help Strength for the Journey, Volunteer Ministry Center, Interfaith Health Clinic, Family Promise, YWCA of Knoxville, and the Faith Coalition for a total of \$1000. (Some of our 2016 donations were sent at the beginning of 2017. This should not change our budgeted gifts for 2017.) We need to evaluate who to help next year. We have an additional \$1500 in the budget to help individuals which has not been spent.

We have been in conversation about becoming a support group for Family Promise and plan to make a decision about this at our annual meeting. This would be something concrete that we could do and would help keep our focus on helping homeless families get back on their feet.

The following words spoken by John Gill at Church of the Savior this past Sunday seemed appropriate to our Community, so I share them with you:

“In Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica he simply said, ‘Thank you. Thank you for your work of faith and your labor of love and your steadfastness of hope in Christ. Thank you for your joy even in the face of persecution, for being an example to all who face oppression and persecution in our world. Thank you for all the ways God's love is made known by your faith, not with words but in all the things you do, especially in your spirit of welcome. For in that welcome everyone sees,’ Paul said, ‘Everyone see how you have turned away from false icons to serve the living God, who is only and ever seen in the lives of people like you. Thank you for being imitators of Christ,’ he said, ‘who is the face of God, turned toward us.’ Sisters and brothers, when we are able to let

go of our grasp on things, when we're able to release our desperate hold on the self we think we want to be, that others have told us we ought to be, when we give generously of our time and our talents and the gifts of our spirit and resources to bless the world and to bless others, then God is seen in the world again, not in our words alone but in our lives in every act of mercy, compassion, and kindness . May we recognize that presence in our lives and in one another and in all those we serve."

Amen and amen.

Jan Thomas
Prior