

## Vestry Speech

Skip Hooper, Incoming Senior Warden

I recently viewed the movie, A Christmas Carol, the Alastir Sim version. If you remember this one which was filmed in black and white, Jacob Marley appears laden with chains to begin the process of awakening the humanity in Scrooge. As I stand here I feel a little like Jacob. I remember Jim Kowalski one time explaining Apostolic Succession whereby the bishops of the Episcopal Church are connected one to another back over time to the Twelve Apostles in an unbroken chain. There is however another chain, just as real. It stretches from Harvey Watkins, who is remembered by the plaque on the wall, and beyond up through Art Brown, Laura Wilcock, Jennifer Boyd, Melissa Graves, Julie Pearson and finally Steve Gramps to name only the most recent Senior Wardens. At this time I feel that chain acutely, which is not necessarily bad. One thing about chains, they go both ways, and I may have to pull on mine occasionally. As I said to Steve, I have not deleted his phone number nor his email address from my Blackberry.

There is no doubt that 2009 will be a year of great blessings and great challenges for St. Luke's. First and foremost we have the challenge of maintaining the day to day operations of the Parish so that our many beloved ministries can remain strong and prosper. With God's help and the continuing hard work of the Clergy, Vestry and administrative staff we will accomplish this. Second, we are in the midst of an extremely challenging economy, which provides a great opportunity for all of us. In the story of the fishes and the loaves, the more Jesus gave away the more he had. I believe Jesus should be our example in weathering this financial storm. Third, we have the challenge of completing Forward in Faith

If Forward in Faith ended today it would be a rousing success. But so much more is still possible.

Forward in Faith is not about constructing a couple of homes, or a Youth and Community Center or renovating the undercroft. If we focus only on bricks and mortar, Forward in Faith will not be truly successful.

Forward in Faith is about Person to Person meeting the needs of an exploding client list in very hard economic times. Forward in Faith is about maintaining a faith based youth community to serve as a counter-balance to the coarseness of what passes as popular culture today. Forward in Faith is committing to be inclusive, not isolationist, in our relationships with others, a recognition that our brothers and sisters are as close as the person in the pew next to you, or as far away as the slums of Asia depicted all too graphically in the film Slumdog Millionaire. Forward in Faith is about providing the opportunity for each of us personally to grow in faith, by maintaining our inspiring music program under Neal and most importantly, continuing a long tradition of attracting and keeping very special people as our clergy, and in David, Linda, Paul and Andrew we have a very special group. Walt Whitman spoke about speakers who are capable of tickling your ears. I think here every Sunday we are fortunate to have some pretty good ear ticklers at St. Luke's. Lastly, Forward in Faith is about maintaining a place where, as Wordsworth wrote, it is possible "...with an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy, we see into the life of things."

I would be remiss if I did not close by thanking profusely Steve Gramps for educating me in the ways of a Senior Warden. I only hope I can maintain the very high standards he set. And a thank you to all of the Vestry Members both remaining and retiring for opening up to me the incredible community which is St. Luke's. I liken the experience to being invited backstage at a play after sitting in the audience. You see all of the deep spiritual commitment, love for St. Luke's and hard work that keeps this place running and it is truly amazing.