

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



PALMER MEMORIAL
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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The Rector's
Report will be
given as the
sermon at all
worship services
on Sunday,
January 23.

WARDEN'S REPORT

Our last twelve months at Palmer have reflected many of the ongoing realities facing the people of God's Earth as the year has further revealed the promise of grace and salvation through the life and teachings of Jesus. At the beginning of 2021, our tradition to create an Annual Report was enhanced by the "I Am Palmer" series of reflections from members of our community with personal insight into certain tangible challenges and discoveries that we associated with the COVID-19 pandemic; of living our lives in relative isolation, with adjusting to the sometimes turbulent times of our global economy, in the political uncertainty of change in our nation's leadership, and by the dis-ease of social injustice that's dominated our news and weighed upon our collective consciences. Yet despite these truths, as Palmers we have worked to support a renewed emphasis on our mission, our ministries and the Good News we're sharing both within the confines of our beloved campus as well as beyond the walls of our parish home. During the first 100 years of our church, we've grown, evolved and changed as a congregation and in the scope of our mission. And this Annual Report promises more good things in the years ahead.



Introducing this year's Annual Report, I'm pleased to present a well-illustrated summary of ongoing activities that help describe and expand our understanding of the truly diverse range of committees and efforts, the special initiatives and outreach projects that have been embraced and supported by our church community. As worship services and weekly activities have proceeded, with a somewhat reduced presence on campus but also a robust and enhanced virtual presence online, our Christian Education opportunities have continued with a dynamic array of webinars and presentations and a wide variety of weekly Bible Studies. There was a reduction of some in-person gatherings and events because of the pandemic, affecting, for example, both the Women's Retreat and the Men's Retreat last year.

continued next page

WARDEN'S REPORT CONTINUED

But the Parish Retreat did take place last November at Camp Allen, and many participants thought it was the best one in recent memory. Amid these ups and downs, we came together as best we could to celebrate our community and worship the Lord. And we continue to do that, looking forward to times not far ahead, when we will all be able to return safely to a regular practice of coming together at Palmer.

Officers and Vestry Councils – Giving thanks in particular to those outgoing members of the Vestry (**Bold** indicating rolling off, **January 2022**) along with the Clergy, the Staff and the People of Palmer Church:

- Junior Warden – **Shannon Westin, MD** for outstanding service as public health advisor to the Vestry and Chair of the 2022 Nominating Committee.
- Clerk – Libby Spoede for faithful, accurate, timely and conscientious service to the parish.
- Worship – **Stephen Killworth** with Jim Rosenbach
- Outreach – Kelly Williams with Danna Kurtin
- Good News – Lam Yu with Melanie Fahey and **Randy Byrd** who moved home to Tennessee with wife Sherry
- Stewardship – Rand Key and Michael Murphy
- Finance – Posey Saenz
- Communications – **Susannah Webb**
- Building and Grounds – **Gretta Boshara** with **David Candler** who filled the third-year vacancy left by Randy Byrd

Palmer Clergy – The “Best preaching in the Diocese” – Jim Key, Annual Report, 2019:

- Ryan Hawthorne – most recently ordained, already embraced
- Jack Karn – Our Deacon and Youth Ministry Leader, newly wedded and beloved
- Liz Parker – Our compassionate Associate Rector for Pastoral Care and Outreach
- David Wantland – Our dearly loved, now in Savannah, GA
- Neil Willard – Our collegial Pastor and Rector

Palmer Staff & Contractors – Appreciation and Thanks:

- Brady Knapp – Music Director
- Ken Cowan – Organist
- Ben Henderson – Associate Organist
- Jessica Evans – Finance
- Sue Howard – Membership and Hospitality
- Roger Hutchison – Director of Christian Formation and Parish Life
- Dustin Jesudason – Director of Communications
- Tara McConathy – Business Administrator
- Jimmy Parrales – Sexton Manager
- Gerry Sandoval – Facilities Manager
- Clarence Hulin – Head of Palmer Security
- City of Houston Police Department

Completed Palmer Task Forces – Update on Active Initiatives, 2021:

- Membership / Newcomer Task Force, commissioned by Sr. Warden Burdette Keeland 2020, Report submitted and approved with assignment completed,
- Property Development Task Force, commissioned by Sr. Warden Jim Key in 2018/2019, Fulfilled in 2021 by a presentation to the Vestry with a recommendation about the facilitation of a process to consider possibilities for potential growth or physical change on our campus for the benefit of Palmer and its mission if the Vestry later chooses to invite the congregation to have a conversation about that specific topic. Palmers, of course, love the historical buildings on our campus, which are described so beautifully in this video by fellow Palmer and architectural historian Stephen Fox.

Overview for 2022 – The Next 100 Years at PMEC:

- Strategic Planning Process – To consider together our mission on this side of the pandemic and to create a sustainable future that perpetuates our “Meaningful Christian presence in Houston and Beyond” (Jim Key, Annual Report, 2019). The Vestry has considered and affirmed moving forward with a planning process that will engage the entire Palmer congregation and consider the broader community beyond the space between Main and Fannin in Houston at the holy place which we call our spiritual home.

Respectfully submitted,
David W. Robinson, FAIA, Senior Warden

PASTORAL CARE

At Palmer Church, we strive to be a community who cares for one another. We all have times when we need the comfort and support of the community, whether that is in a time of illness, death, or a life change. At Palmer, we believe that God “comforts us in all our troubles so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor 1:4). Some of the pastoral care opportunities include clergy visits, Community of Hope (COH), Palmer Place Apartments, Eucharistic Visitors (EV’s), Order of St. Luke (OSL), Stephen Ministers, Loaves & Fishes, Caregivers Zoom, Surviving Widowhood, Walking the Mourner’s Path, and Funeral Guild.

LOAVES & FISHES

Palmer’s Loaves & Fishes program was conceptualized in late 2019/early 2020 and launched into action with the beginning of the pandemic. Loaves & Fishes is an in-reach program, with parishioners responding to other parishioners facing significant challenges and a strained support system. In the first few weeks of Covid we provided assistance picking up groceries. Since then, parishioners have delivered meals, run errands, sent cards, made phone calls, taken in a dog for a few days, and even provided a spare dryer for someone in turmoil.

Our current distribution list includes 145 parishioners who have signed up to be contacted when there is a need. Since inception, thirteen households have been assisted. Forty-four people have provided assistance, with more than 60 tasks (meals, errands, etc.) fulfilled.

Those in need and with a strained support system can contact staff, clergy or Laura Van Ness.

Submitted by Laura Van Ness,
Loaves & Fishes Coordinator



PALMER PLACE MINISTRY



After a hiatus due to the Covid-19 epidemic, the Palmer Place Ministry is excited to announce we are accepting guests once again and soon will be providing affordable and comfortable "homes away from home" for many Texas Medical Center patients and their families as they undergo treatment for an extended period of time. On February 1, we will be opening two 2-Bedroom/2-Bath apartments in the SYNC Med Center Apartment complex. Upon re-activating our apartments online via InSpirit Ministries (an organization which coordinates seven local church apartment ministry participants) both of our apartments were immediately reserved by guests and their caregivers. Our ministry is blessed by dedicated volunteers who instantly rejoined the team and went back to work. As I am the new Coordinator for Palmer Place I am also blessed, not only by these faithful volunteers, but also by the every-day (and just about every-night, too) guidance of Sandra Begalke who is always available to me and who has led this ministry wisely and tirelessly for over a decade.

Palmer Place is about more than just providing housing; we are a ministry of compassionate volunteers with welcoming spirits who desire to reflect God's love to our apartment guests and to be a reminder that they are not alone on their medical journey. We visit our patients/families on a regular basis; we add them to our Palmer Church prayer list so that they are lifted in prayer every day; we invite them to worship with us on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings; we promptly address any maintenance issues in the apartments; we assist those who come without a vehicle to get out into the community if they are able; and we celebrate various seasons and holidays through apartment decorations and treats.

Submitted by Kay Jackson,
Palmer Place Coordinator



WORSHIP COUNCIL

In 2021, the Worship Council strove to provide onsite services to the fullest extent possible given Covid restrictions. The 11:00 o'clock services were broadcast live on Zoom and Facebook.

For most of the year services had a reduced number of servers (Ushers, Acolytes, Chalice Bearers, and Readers) due to Covid restrictions. The 9:00 o'clock services were (weather permitting) held outside to allow for a greater number to attend.

Onsite services were limited to an hour in length to enable cleanups between services. Thus, readings were limited to the Gospel reading plus one additional reading instead of having three readings.

As restrictions relaxed in the fall of 2021, Worship Council expanded the number of servers – such as adding a thurifer to the 11:00 o'clock services.

In 2022 Worship Council will continue to adjust services consistent with the then existing Covid restrictions with the goal of returning all services to normal when possible.

Submitted by Steven Killworth,
Worship Council Chair



OUTREACH COUNCIL

Palmer Outreach continued to adapt in 2021, keeping in contact with the organizations we support and mobilizing to meet needs. There are unending needs in the community, but Palmers continue to reach out with joy and compassion. Some highlights from 2021:

Early in the year, we held a Lenten drive for Star of Hope and New Hope Housing, collecting new towels, blankets, and sheets, and later in the year held a school supply drive for Star of Hope.

A group of Palmers hosted an afternoon appreciation reception for teachers at Yellowstone Academy. Blood drives were held on the Palmer campus throughout the year.

When we were unable to return in-person for Serve Sunday in the spring, Palmers contributed to provide Jason's Deli box lunches to residents of New Hope Housing Brays Crossing. Serve Sunday returned in August with on campus projects in the Parish Hall, and in November returned to sending groups out into the community. We are optimistic about continuing to expand Serve Sunday opportunities in 2022!

Palmer Assisting Reentry (PAR) returned to providing homemade meals to the men of the houses we support, including Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts. PAR made a \$20,000 donation to the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP) loan program. As the loans are repaid, the money will go back into the fund to continue to supply loans.

The Advent season featured opportunities for parishioners to share through Angel Tree and Alternative Gift Giving. For Thanksgiving, a Palmer outreach ministry leader secured a donation from HEB to provide each family at New Hope Housing Reed with a Thanksgiving pie.

Paused ministries and gearing up again: After a hiatus that began in 2020, Palmer Place Apartment ministry is reorganizing to reopen in 2022. The Palmer Refugee Resettlement ministry is seeking volunteers, furniture, and funds to help resettle a family in Houston in 2022.

We give thanks for all Palmers who participated in Outreach, in the literal reaching out into the city. There are always needs in our community and always ways for every Palmer to get involved in meeting the needs, from "as available" help, like donating towels to Star of Hope or providing food for a PAR meal, to leading a Palmer Outreach ministry. All are welcome to serve!

Submitted by Kelly Williams
Outreach Council Chair

GOOD NEWS COUNCIL



In 2021, the Evangelism Council rebranded itself as the Good News Council. The name change reflects the central mission of our council, which is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Good News of Palmer Church with our community.

During the summer of 2021, we offered Embracing Evangelism: A six-part digital course exploring our call to seek, name, and celebrate Jesus' loving presence in the stories of all people – and then invite everyone to more. Each session featured teachings on Episcopal evangelism, group discussion, and exercises to help Episcopalians understand the ministry and call to evangelism. The entire Embracing Evangelism series consisted of six video sessions, each under 45 minutes. This offering was made possible through a partnership between The Episcopal Church and Virginia Episcopal Seminary.

This digital course was a follow-up to the Sharing Stories event we hosted earlier this year for Palmer staff and lay leaders. We are in conversation with a facilitator for our second "StorySharing" online workshop, and the event will take place in early 2022. These workshops provide ideas and strategies for continuing sharing and building upon the Good News of our faith and beyond.

Beginning in 2022, in partnership with adult formation at Palmer, we will offer the following short-term small groups: LGBTQ+, Health/Wellness, and Art/Creativity. The topics/groups will change quarterly.

Roger Hutchison will be the new director of Welcome Roundtable – a gathering of welcome leaders from around the Houston area. Open to Episcopal evangelists – both lay and clergy, paid and unpaid. This group shares best practices, resources, and ideas related to evangelism, welcoming newcomers, and sharing the GOOD NEWS. Roger's position is a visible and important role in the diocese and positively reflects Palmer.

Submitted by Lam Yu
Good News Council Chair



STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL



This year's theme, "Lift Up Your Hearts," uses familiar words from our liturgy, inviting each of us to step out of our isolation and do something together as a community, as God's own people here at Palmer. Those words we hear so often are encouraging, hopeful, and inclusive. We are grateful for our parish's response to that invitation, allowing us to remain steadfast and resilient, and to celebrate the generosity and commitment of this congregation – even in the midst of great weariness and challenge.

Only because of your generosity will we be able to strengthen the health of our congregational life. The pandemic is not over yet, and we continue to require your financial support, your giving back to God, in order to serve the various needs of our parish and neighborhood community, and to continue regathering our congregation and reconnecting Palmers to one another and to our many ministries.

See the summary below. In line with Episcopal Church giving trends across the country, our pledging units have decreased, especially in the midst of the pandemic. But the good news is that Palmer's average giving estimate (i.e., pledge) has increased. We are hopeful that more giving estimates will come in as we move with great hope into this New Year in spite of the pandemic. Regardless of the amount of your own giving estimate, large or small, your willingness to join your fellow Palmers and lift up your own heart with them strengthens our congregation's ongoing witness to God's mercy and compassion in the world around us. If you have not already done that, you can help grow the total number of pledges for 2022 shown below. That number will not be complete without you.

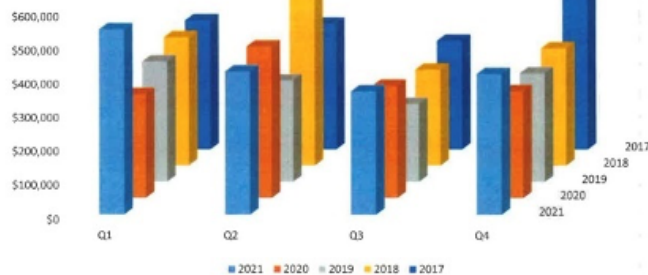
Thank you for your loyalty and faith as we seek, together, to know and share the love of Jesus Christ.

Submitted by Mike Murphy and Rand Key
Stewardship Co-Chairs

YEAR	AMOUNT PLEDGED	# OF PLEDGES	AVERAGE PLEDGE
2019	\$1.590M	292	\$5,448.00
2020	\$1.593M	279	\$5,712.00
2021	\$1.503M	230	\$6,538.00
2022	\$1,495M (still in progress)	210 (still in progress)	\$7,216.00 (still in progress)

FINANCE COUNCIL

Operating & Designated Funds Cash Balance



- Average year-end cash balance ~ \$386K
- Actual 2021 cash balance ~ \$416K
- Average pledges increased from ~ \$5,412 in 2017 to ~ \$7,196 in 2022

Operating Fund Expenditures



- Annual expenses ~ \$2MM +- 10% since 2016
- 2022 budgeted expenses increased ~\$120K from 2021 budget

Given the ongoing pandemic, the financial picture at Palmer has been relatively resilient over the past year. Expenses held steady with reduced costs, attributable to our limited campus activities, being balanced out by an unexpected energy bill, relating to the February storm. Pledges that were committed to during highly uncertain times were completely delivered. As a result, we emerged from the year with our relatively high cash balance intact.

For the year ahead the budget looks tighter. Pledges collected so far seem to be in line with the lower total amounts that we have seen in the COVID years, however we are hopeful that we will return to more normal campus activities. This will of course translate to more normal spending for the parish.

Submitted by
Posey Saenz, Finance Council Chair
Larry Wood, Treasurer

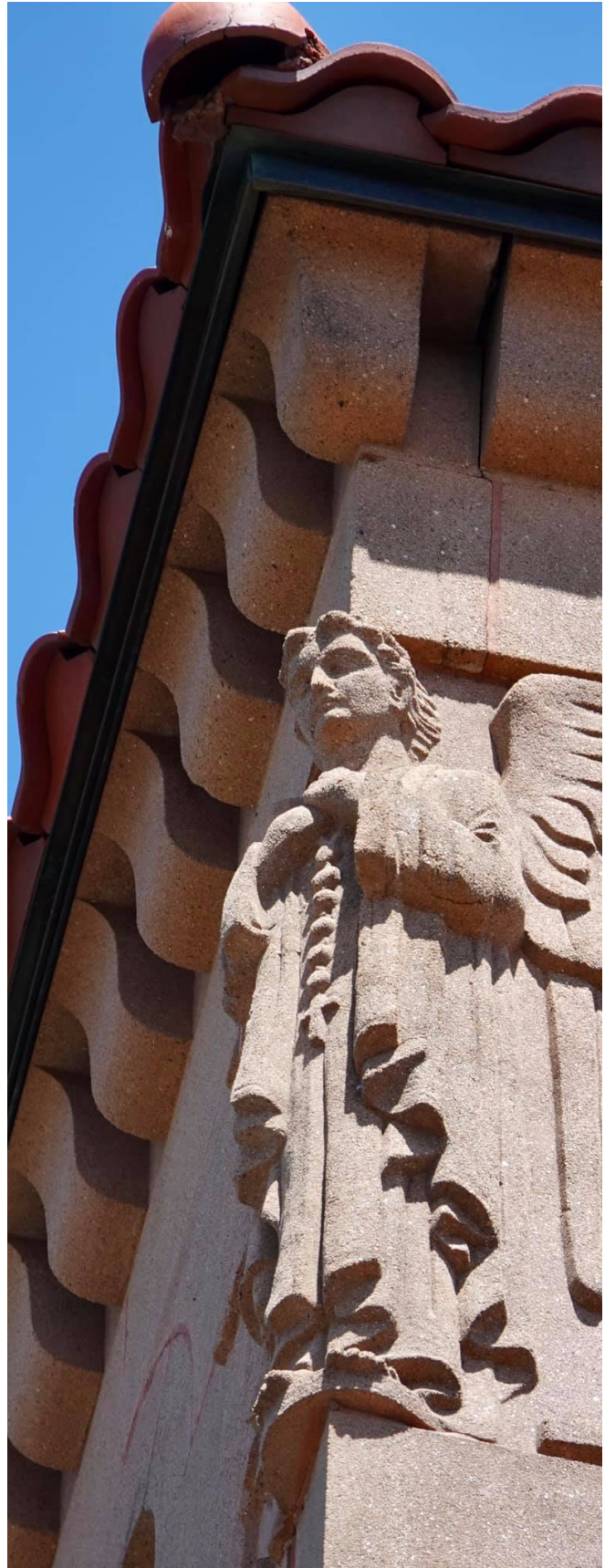
ENDOWMENT BOARD

The Endowment began 2021 with an asset value of \$4,979,386.11. During 2021, \$217,000 was distributed from the Endowment to the Church. \$200,000 was for maintenance and repairs of the parish campus and rectory, and \$17,000 was provided to supplement the \$43,000 escrow fund set up by the Finance Committee. The Endowment received \$12,580.25 in contributions for the year. As of December 31, 2021, the value of the Endowment assets was \$5,457,510.44, and the Endowment's corpus/principal, which will never be violated, was \$3,081,416. The Endowment assets are professionally managed by Vanguard Assets Management Services within the investment policies set by the trustees.

The Daphne Palmer Neville Society's membership has reached 72. The membership consists of those individuals or families who have contributed to the Endowment or have made arrangements in their wills or retirement accounts to contribute to the Endowment.

The trustees of the Palmer Endowment Fund during 2021 were Mike Soika, Chair; Laura Van Ness, Treasurer; Lynn Morstead, Secretary; Bet Hunter; and Cindi Tharpe. Linda Kelly serves as Counsel. We will continue to look for opportunities to build the Endowment and the Daphne Palmer Neville Society.

Submitted by Mike Soika
Endowment Board Chair



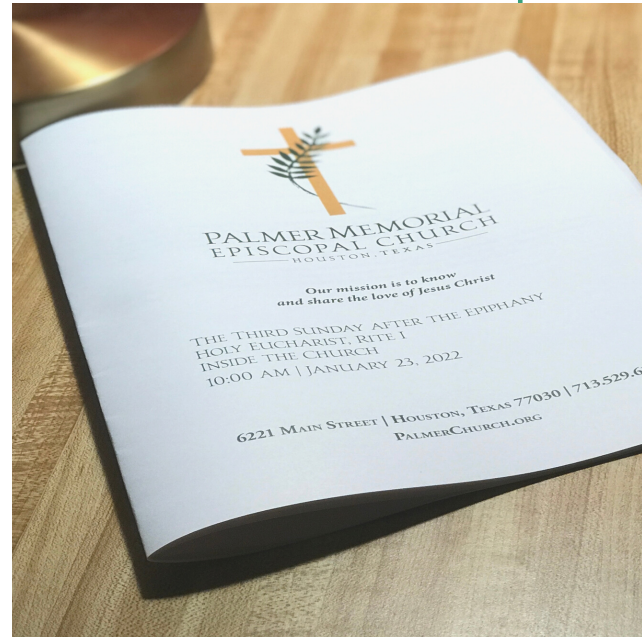
COMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL

Keeping members of the parish and our neighbors apprised of Palmer's programs and activities in 2021 did not abate despite the on-going challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our busy year was marked by some of the following accomplishments, led by the outstanding efforts of Dustin Jesudason:

- Reimagining the 2020 Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church Annual Report by compiling installments of our I Am Palmer series (reflections of parishioners during the pandemic) in a keepsake booklet;
- Supporting the return to on-campus worship with enhanced live-streaming of services, producing printed service leaflets (including highlights from the weekly The Palmer) and updating our COVID-19 safety measures in accordance with the status of the pandemic;
- Recording and hosting videos of testimonials and candidate statements to support stewardship and church election activities, respectively;
- Refreshing on-campus signage throughout the year to announce worship times and mark seasons of the church (e.g., Lent, Stewardship, Advent, etc.);
- Enhancing the website to include infographics within our rotating banner highlighting upcoming services and programs as well as providing web buttons on the homepage to facilitate ease of access to these events virtually;
- Increasing our social media footprint through engaging posts on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts;
- Creating postcards to stay connected with parishioners with timely notes; and
- Sustaining the utility of the weekly The Palmer (now being disseminated to more than 600 unique users) with up-to-date information about the church, available programs and stories of interest.

We anticipate another productive year ahead and have begun identifying priorities including developing digital content designed for sharing on social media, updating our "Welcome to Palmer" video and evaluating opportunities for enhancing both the content and functionality of the Palmer website.

Submitted by Susannah Koontz Webb, Communication Council Chair



BUILDING & GROUNDS COUNCIL

The Rectory:

Repairs begun in 2020, which related to the chimney repair, were completed early in February. In early fall 2021, the back and side porches were refurbished and the exterior wood walls were power-washed. The fence on the east side of the property was replaced (that cost shared by Palmer and the neighbor to the east). Various appliances were repaired and replaced as needed. The repair and refinishing of the damaged hardwood floors on the first floor will be addressed in 2022.

The Palmer campus:

Interior: An AV booth was built in the choir loft to enable Palmer to live stream services and the front of the Nave was enhanced by new woodwork on the low walls flanking the stairs up to the Sanctuary. Rooms A102 and A202 were set up to handle hybrid Zoom meetings. Multiple plumbing, HVAC and BAS monitoring problems were handled. Due to the generosity of a donation from friends of Palmer, the administration reception area was able to get a new look

Exterior:

Several small projects relating to the entrance to the Courtyard from the south parking lot were completed. The Courtyard fountain was rebuilt and now functions. Seasonal plantings were rotated to enhance the permanent landscaping, some signage has been replaced and repaired. The design for the new insert for the monument sign facing Main Street has been approved and will soon be complete. Power-washing the exterior walls of the buildings is substantially complete. The repairs of vandalism damage have been finished: the leaded glass window replacements for the north wall of the building are in house and ready to be installed; the graffiti has been removed from wood doors and they have been refinished.

Contracts:

New contracts have been negotiated for our trash collection service and security services provider. A new contract with our electrical service provider prevents future occurrences of the exorbitant charges that so many Texans, Palmer included, absorbed after the February freeze.

Next Steps:

For 2022 the emphasis of the Building and Grounds Council will continue to be keeping expenses as low as possible while maintaining the integrity of our buildings. Besides the floor repair in the Rectory, it is hoped that the lighting in Parish Hall can be updated to more appropriately light the changing exhibits of artwork on view in the room.

Submitted by Gretta Boshara
Building and Grounds Council Chair



Rest eternal grant
to them, O Lord:
And let light
perpetual shine
upon them. May
they and all the
departed, through
the mercy of God,
rest in peace, and
rise in glory.
Amen.

NECROLOGY REPORT

Curtis Daniell

Richard Lee Jones

Patricia Hendrick Brito

Laura L. Cluett

The Rev'd John Wilson Price

Lawrence Gordon Root, MD

Robert William Pruitt

Bettye Claire Bryant

Edward Joseph Svrcek

Herbert Joseph Harris

Mary Lampland Tobin

Thelma Florence Hunt





PALMER MEMORIAL
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

— HOUSTON, TEXAS —