

# PALMER MEMORIAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

JANUARY 17, 2016

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# Report of the Senior Warden

## Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church

### 2016 Annual Meeting

The 2015 calendar year at Palmer has been one of new beginnings as well as transitions. This was Neil Alan Willard's first full calendar year as Rector of Palmer. Father Willard has moved through the year with confidence and steady leadership.

Father Willard recruited Roger Hutchison to be the Director of Christian Formation & Parish Life. Roger and his wife Kristin and daughter Riley moved from South Carolina to Texas in mid-June. Among other things, Roger is leading the children of Palmer through "liturgy prep" each Sunday. It has been noted that watching him with the children is a little like watching the Pied Piper leading them. It is exciting to watch the number of children grow at both the 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM services.

Father Willard also interviewed Alex Easley as a seminarian to become our third full-time, paid member of the clergy. She is a 2015 graduate of the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin. Her title at Palmer is Curate. A Curate is basically a priest in training for two years, appointed by the Bishop. She joined as a transitional Deacon and will be ordained as a Priest on January 20, 2016, by Bishop Andy Doyle. Alex began her service at Palmer at the beginning of August. She hit the ground running and is working in the areas of pastoral care, outreach, young adults, and youth.

The Way Station Steering Committee recommended to the Vestry that we close The Way Station and transition our guests to The Star of Hope. The Vestry approved the recommendation. The Way Station closed on August 28, 2015, after 24 years of serving the homeless population. We believe that during that 24 years, over one million breakfasts were served. This was an incredible ministry and the decision was not an easy one. Countless hours of work with the City of Houston and the Diocese of Texas were involved. The bottom line was how to best serve the homeless. The correct decision was made 24 years ago to begin The Way Station and the correct decision was made in 2015 to close The Way Station.

My heartfelt thanks to everyone at Palmer. 2015 was a year of transition. Changes are not easy to make, but the people of Palmer have looked to the future with an eye on the past.

I thank the Vestry for their service and their patience with me. I am a first-time Senior Warden and I know I made plenty of mistakes. I sought counsel from several of Palmer's more seasoned parishioners and I thank them for their advice and support.

We thank our clergy. Thanks to Father Neil Willard, Father Dub Brooks, and Deacon Linda Shelton for all that they do and for their leadership. Thank you Alex for accepting the call to Palmer. Thanks to Father Patrick Hall, the diocesan missionary to Rice University. We are blessed at Palmer to have a host of non-stipendiary priests: Sam Todd, Henry Strobel, John Price, Kit Wallingford, and Cynthia Tobola. We thank them for all that they do for Palmer.

Palmer is a wonderful place to worship and feel the love of Jesus Christ. We are not perfect, but as I sit in the Nave and listen to the organ, the singers and yes, the sermons, it does seem like a glimpse of heavenly glory. We now have to make sure those that do not know Palmer, find us. It is our job to then welcome them and continue sharing the love of Jesus Christ.

In closing, thank you for allowing me the privilege to serve Palmer as Senior Warden this year. I have learned much and will treasure this time. Thanks to all of you for all that you do for Palmer. Most importantly, thanks for your prayers. They are always needed and felt.

*Thanks be to God,  
Tim Driggers  
Senior Warden*

# Ministry Reports

## Advent Gift Market

The 2015 Advent Gift Market was held on all four Sunday mornings in Advent. Donations were also received via online donations through the Palmer eGiving website, as well as donations dropped off at the church office.

Donations during the 2015 Market totaled \$9,920.51 (one-third of which was donated online), and were designated for the following ministries: Archway Academy, Emergency Aid Coalition, Kairos Ministry, Palmer Place Apartments, Refugee Resettlement Ministry, Star of Hope, and Yellowstone Academy. This was the first year that Emergency Aid Coalition and Star of Hope participated in the Advent Gift Market.

Plans for the 2016 Advent Gift Market include:

- Once again running the Market all 4 Sundays in Advent for people to select and make donations
- Encouraging volunteers from the Market ministries to assist at the Market table and highlight their ministries each week
- Continuing to improve and promote online donations and instructions
- Pursuing the capability to make Advent Gift Market donations via credit card in person
- Working with Serve Vessel team to re-brand Advent Gift Market to reach more people and better explain this ministry opportunity during the holiday season

*Ansley Browns and Bobbie Wallingford, co-chairs*

## Angel Tree

Angel Tree is a division of Prison Ministries and provides Christmas gifts to children whose parent(s) is incarcerated. In 2015 Palmer Church requested 100 children but, because Harris County Jail did not participate, we received only 47 names and more than half of those children live in Brazoria and Chambers Counties. In spite of the delivery challenges, many Palmer parishioners volunteered with this ministry and we were able to serve 42 children in the homes of 19 caregivers. Angel Tree is an extremely valuable holiday family activity.

*Johnna Kincaid*

## Change Ringers of Palmer

In the past year, the change ringers of Palmer

- Continued ringing between 9 and 11 am services. The first Sunday ringing was discontinued during the reduced service schedule time (summer months). It was missed about half of the time due to low ringing attendance at that hour.
- By year end, we had 9 active members of the Sunday Service band. This is down from last year. All 9 are members of the NAGCR (North American Guild of Change Ringers).
- Participated somewhat in the weekly joint practices shared between the three churches in Houston that has change ringing bells (on Monday night).
- Rang for 4 Palmer weddings (as requested).
- Performed maintenance (twice) on our change ringing bells.
- Held two social event/business meeting for the ringers.
- Jointly hosted the 7 Towers Festival the weekend after Easter.
- Participated in the Wendall Blake Striking competition and came in 2nd place.

- Published 3 of 4 quarterly reports from Houston for the North American Guild of Change Ringers

Some of the planned activities for this upcoming year include:

- Continued working to become more fully integrated as a ministry at Palmer.
- Further leveraging the Palmer website in support of the Change Ringing Ministry.
- Getting our change ringing video posted (with sound) on our internal Video Display system to show what is going on in the bell tower. What we do is visually and aurally interesting and what the bells do is quite eye catching and very hard to visualize and we wish to share this with the parish and the larger community if possible.
- Complete the Safe Guarding God's children so that it can better enable children to learn ringing.

### Challenges

It takes a long time, much effort and personal commitment by the ringers and the teachers for the ringers (individually and as a group) to gain ringing skills. It takes an even longer view and time to build leadership skills so that this ministry will persist past the current leadership.

Out of our half of our active ringers are parishioners, half or not. We desire to recruit more parishioners into this ministry. We also desire to build not just ringing skills but ringing leadership skills so that this ministry will continue and thrive.

*Allen Nunley*  
*Ringing Master*

## Christian Formation

**Christian Formation** is the lifelong process of growing in our relationship with God, self, others, and all creation. Every experience in our lives can provide us with the opportunity to express our faith; the challenge we face is recognizing these opportunities and learning ways to live a sometimes-countercultural life in a secular world.

We are each on a journey of faith that requires nourishment and at Palmer we find that in community, in fellowship, and in education opportunities. By focusing on our relationship with God and one another we are in a constant process of transformation that lasts our entire lives. Join us and deepen your faith, relationships, and commitment to God.

Over the past year, formational opportunities for adults took place during the 10:00 hour on Sunday mornings. These included Faith Is... a series intended to help us connect our Baptismal promises to our life practices and actions and Knit Together in Your Will – a class for parents of young children. Beginning on January 24, 2016, the "Faith Is" class will now be called The Rector's Forum and will feature special...

**Great Wednesdays** featured a Connections Class for Newcomers; a study of Searching for Sunday--a book by Rachel Held Evan; The Book of Job; Traces of the Trade film study; and a study of Falling Upward--a book by Richard Rohr. We have begun the new year with an online and in-person course offered by the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and facilitated by the Rev'd Kit Wallingford; Connections Class for Newcomers; and Painting the Psalms--a new offering facilitated by The Rev'd Neil Willard and Roger Hutchison that reflects on the Psalms in a way that intertwines the creative arts and the beauty of poetry.

**Christian Formation Classes** for Children and Youth also take place during the 10:00 hour on Sunday mornings. We follow Weaving God's Promises--a comprehensive, three-year Christian education curriculum developed and written exclusively for the Episcopal Church. A significant change this past year was the integration of the children and young families back into the 9:00 and 11:00 services. Children are invited to participate in Liturgy Preparation, known previously as Children's Chapel. "Liturgy Prep" takes place for a brief time during both the 9:00 and 11:00 services. Children are invited to follow the children's cross (crafted by Trent Williams) to St. Bede's Chapel where they pray, sing, and explore the Gospel together. The children return to



their families during the Peace. We began the year with around 8-10 children in attendance. We now average 35-45 children each week. We also began the year by placing 65 Jesus Storybook Bibles in the pews, another intentional way of saying to children and their families, “You are welcome here.”

Some other highlights for Palmer’s children:

- The Very Big Story – Palmer VBS
- Relocation of Sunday School classrooms
- Enhanced children’s library
- A special Friday night picnic in the Parish Hall
- Christmas Pageant
- A visit from the Houston Museum of Natural Science’s Discovery Dome with a special presentation on the Star of Bethlehem
- Decorating fabric squares that will be quilted together for a refugee family.

### **Youth Ministry at Palmer**

We appreciate your continued prayers, patience, and support as we continue to strengthen and build the youth program at Palmer.

Christian formation happens in many ways. One of the places that this happens is on Sunday morning during Sunday School. There is a Sunday morning class for junior high youth and a class for senior high youth. These weekly gatherings provide a safe and intentional space for young people to explore their faith, their doubts, and their questions.

On Wednesday nights, young people were invited to work on homework, eat dinner with the larger church community, and participate in Touchstone, a relaxed gathering with The Rev’d Alex Easley and her team of adult volunteers. This past fall, the youth studied 1st Corinthians 13 and explored what love is and what love isn’t. The conversations so far have been deeply powerful and moving. Dinner is from 6:15-7; Touchstone meets from 7-8 in the Youth Room.

Then, of course, there were the monthly EYC gatherings. Palmer youth were able to write letters to the residents of the Star of Hope Women’s and Family Shelter. Palmer’s Youth joined up with a couple of other youth groups for Beacon Night at The Dynamo. In November, Palmer’s youth packed 42 care packages that were mailed to Palmers who are in college or boarding school. This included students who have graduated from Archway Academy.

We’ve kicked off the New Year with a Parent’s Meeting and a full calendar. There will be a Youth Bible Study and several weeks of “Tough Topic” conversations based on issues the youth are interested in discussing. There are also a number of other things in the works including an intergenerational Palmer Mission Trip to Costa Rica. We are also looking forward to participating in diocesan youth retreats.

Lastly, we are working on putting together a youth leadership team. These youth will have the opportunity to help plan youth activities and learn what it means to serve as a youth leader in the church.

*Roger Hutchison*

### **Community of Hope**

Again this year, Palmer’s Center of the Community of Hope partnered with Christ the King Lutheran Church for monthly education and support meetings. Patricia Hinojosa was Palmer’s only trainee and her honorary membership certificate was presented to her husband Robert at the spring graduation and commissioning service in April. Fr. Willard participated in the service and Palmer hosted the reception at Christ the King.

The Community of Hope is a small group of trained parishioners whose ministry is to create a Christian community of volunteer lay chaplains united in prayer, shaped by Benedictine spirituality, and equipped for pastoral care ministry. COH ministers visited persons in hospitals, nursing homes, hospice settings, special

locations serving those in grief such as Bo's Place, and visitors to the Medical Center who may be connected to us through our Palmer Medical Center Ministries. Several members also served as Eucharistic Visitors on Sundays, taking the Eucharist to those unable to attend church.

We hope to grow our ministry to both the Medical Center and to an increasing number of homebound parishioners and having pastorally trained members of the community will be an important part of our ministry going forward. If you are interested in learning more about participating and sharing in the blessings of offering pastoral care, please contact us for more information.

*Faithfully,*

*The Rev. Linda Shelton, Deacon*

## **Dinner and Discussion Group**

Dinner and Discussion gatherings took place on the second Fridays of September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, and May. In addition there was a planning meeting in late August, at which topics and locations for the upcoming nine months were decided.

The purpose of these gatherings is to provide opportunity for deepening friendships in the process of learning about topics of current interest. Typically the setting is a home of participants, and somewhere between twenty-five and forty Palmers will be present. Information about each month's topic and location is distributed by means of the Flash, the Sunday bulletin, and an email list which anyone can request being added to.

No RSVP's are needed. Everyone is welcome. Each person brings a salad, main dish, or dessert to serve six and \$2.50 for beverages and hosting expenses.

*Mary Tobin*

## **Emergency Aid Coalition (EAC)**

The EAC and Palmer continue their long history of partnership in assisting, clothing, and feeding Houston's homeless and working poor (more than a quarter century). As a member congregation Palmer has contributed clothing, food pantry items, back-to-school program support and volunteers.

Palmer is one of sixteen member congregations collectively participating in a united effort to feed, clothe and minister to the homeless, the newly housed and working poor/families in need.

Palmer's involvement past year includes:

- New this year, "Undie Sunday" was a great success, addressing a need for new (not used) clothing in this key category -- Palmer's Parishioners donated more than 637 pairs of socks and 516 pairs of new underwear.
- Palmer's young adult group volunteered in the gently used clothing center, helping size, sort and rack clothing for distribution.
- EAC is now an option in the Advent Gift Market.
- Palmer has donated more than 300, standard grocery-sized sacks of clothing to the EAC!

2015 Emergency Aid Coalition Statistics:

- Served 4,866 adults and 1,986 children in the clothing center. The total number of clothing items distributed was 80,813. Of this, 14,526 items were new underwear and socks.
- Distributed 6,572 sacks of groceries from the food pantry.
- Provided 77,945 sack lunches to clients
- Provided 1,357 students with new backpacks, uniforms/vouchers and grade-appropriate school supplies (from school district back-to-school listings).

*Mary Bradshaw and Tim Raymond - Palmer's representatives on the EAC Board*

## Endowment Fund

The Trustees of the Palmer Endowment for the year 2015 were James Key, Chair, Jere Ahrens, Treasurer, Dawn Hawley, Secretary, Martha Bersch and Jim Mercurio. Linda Kelly serves as Counsel. Alan Christensen rotated off the Board early in 2015 after five years of faithful service and sound advice as Treasurer.

As of January 1, 2014, the value of Endowment assets was 2,173,483.73. The total distributions during the year totaled \$87,584.03 representing interest and principal payment on the remainder of the Palmer building fund balance. The last payment was made in the fourth quarter, and there is no longer any debt from the building campaign. The only other expense in the year was \$100.50 for engraving and a \$25,000 loan to Palmer which will be repaid over five years.

Contributions for the year totaled \$216,760 which increased the permanent corpus of the Endowment to \$1,213,560. Total Endowment assets as of November 30th, 2014, are \$2,108,080 in an account managed by Vanguard Investments and \$75,483.50 at Amegy Bank. The Board reviewed our investment strategy by means of a conference call with our investment counselors at Vanguard. We have a portfolio of moderate risk consisting of A rated bonds and a mixture of domestic and international equities. Since turning the investment decisions over to Vanguard in 2012, the equity portfolio has returned approximately 11% and the total portfolio including bond funds has an average return of 8.33%.

This year has seen further growth in the members of the Daphne Palmer Neville Society, a group of parishioners who have included the Palmer Endowment as part of their estate planning. The number acknowledging such a gift has now grown to 65 estates, individuals and families. It is hoped that such a reminder of support will encourage others to include Palmer in their estate planning.

The Trustees have codified in our minutes that an important part of our purpose of supporting Palmer Ministries is to generate enough income to provide for the maintenance and potential capital projects related to the Church buildings and rectory. All contributions to the Endowment will continue to be used and managed wisely.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*James E. Key*

*Chair*

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*Allen Nunley*  
*Ringing Master*

## Girl Scout Troop 25230

In 2015 Girl Scout Troop 25230 completed its 8th and began its 9th year of “building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.” The youngest girls in the troop are currently 2nd year Cadettes (7th graders in middle school), while the oldest three (and original members) are now sophomores in high school! It's hard to believe the troop that started with Daisies and Brownies back in September 2007 now has advanced to the Cadette and Senior levels!

While the traditional Girl Scout troop model is “one grade, one school,” our troop has bucked that trend since its inception! Our girls

- come from all over Houston
- attend 10 different schools
- represent two levels of Girl Scouts
- Twelve Cadettes (seven 7th graders, five 8th graders) and
- Five Seniors (two 9th graders, three 10th graders)
- include eight members from Palmer (and nine non-members of Palmer).

Our membership is holding quite steady (only one active girl from last year did not renew this year). This is no small miracle given the complexity of middle- and high-school life, and the many other activities in which the girls are involved!

While no one earned a major leadership award in 2015, the 10th graders are beginning to lay the groundwork to create and take on Gold Award projects, while the 8th graders are beginning to do the same for their Silver Award projects. 2016 is shaping up to be a busy, exciting year!

Through the awards the girls earn, the activities they do (like camping), and the opportunities they have to work with girls from outside their circle of friends, they're learning to navigate relationships, and developing skills that will serve them as they grow into independent young women. They're also running their own businesses through the Cookie Sales program. It's cookie season – we hope we can count on your support!!

We are extremely proud of our girls' accomplishments, and grateful for Palmer's continued support of this ministry.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Marie Wehrung, Leader, Troop 25230*

## Holy Spokes

Founded in 2005, the Holy Spokes are Palmer's friendly and welcoming cycling group. These men and women of all ages and skill levels ride for fitness and fellowship and to support worthy causes including the fights against multiple sclerosis and breast cancer. While on the road, the team's friendly spirit and distinctive white jerseys with the Episcopal shield help to spread the name and message of Palmer Church.

The Holy Spokes have informal rides throughout the year and formally participate in two major organized events each year:

- The BP MS 150, a two-day ride in April from Houston to Austin, benefiting MS research. It is the largest fundraising ride of its kind, supporting vital services for men, women and children living with multiple sclerosis.
- The Tour de Pink, a one-day ride in September just outside Houston, benefiting breast cancer awareness and clinical outreach.

In 2015, the Holy Spokes fielded 22 riders in these two events and raised nearly \$10,000.

For 2016, the team welcomes new and experienced riders of all ages, as well as supporters of all kinds. The BP MS 150 is April 16-17, 2016, and this year's team captain is Melanie Fahey ([melanie.fahey@gmail.com](mailto:melanie.fahey@gmail.com)). The 2016 Tour de Pink will be in mid- to late September, with George Webb ([gwebb@alumni.rice.edu](mailto:gwebb@alumni.rice.edu)) as team captain. More detailed information is available on the Holy Spokes ministry page on the Palmer website.

## Hospitality Guild

The mission of the Hospitality Guild is to nurture fellowship and community among Palmer parishioners and visitors by planning and hosting parish-wide events. Members of the Guild are Norma Beazley, Martha Bersch, Ruth Davies, Jeanne Ewing, Pam Harvey, Sara Haynes, Betsy Vanderbrouk, Frances Vonk, Susannah Webb, Shannon Westin, and co-chairs Kathy Herrin and Carolyn Baker.

Members of the Guild planned and hosted the four all-Parish gatherings: the luncheon following the Annual Meeting in January; May Fest lunch with hamburgers and hot dogs; the July 5 covered-dish luncheon; and Festival Day in August. Other occasions during the year were the reception honoring the confirmands in May; the reception in June welcoming Roger Hutchison, Director of Christian Formation & Parish Life, and his wife Kristin and daughter Riley; the reception in August welcoming our curate The Rev'd Alex Easley; and assisting the Palmer choir in its reception following Advent Lessons and Carols in December.

Through May 2015 the Guild supported "Meet on the Patio," under the direction of Frances Vonk. As of May 31, the "after-eleven service gathering" changed to beverages provided by the church and food items to be furnished by parishioners. Accolades go to Frances Vonk for sustaining the program.

In addition to the funds provided in the Church budget, generous gifts by members of the Parish sustain the efforts of the Guild.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Herrin and Carolyn Baker*

## Kairos Prison Ministry

Joseph is a convicted felon nearing the end of a long sentence at TDCJ. Normally that is all that you'd ever know about Joseph. But thanks to Kairos, Joseph meets 30 men from the Free World who don't want to know why he is in prison or for how long. They only want to get to know him and share time with him over a weekend called Kairos. "These men don't want anything from me; I don't get it. Why are they here to see us prisoners?" Well, we tell them, God calls us to this ministry and we show up trusting that God will provide: provide a smile, a greeting, a hand shake, and later ~ when trust is there, a hug.

We form small “Family Groups” and talk about our faith, our lives, and our failures as well. We become vulnerable, open, and honest. God seems to honor that kind of sharing, and slowly the men open their hearts. Palmers, YOU enable men and women just like yourselves to “go forth” into the dark environment of a prison and shine the light of Christ to inmates who are used to the dark. The inmates always wonder what’s in it for us. Well, to be honest, there is nothing more gratifying than to see a man full of hate and fear suddenly, over the course of a weekend, discover that God and his Church really do care and that Jesus is made real in the Community of believers right inside a Texas Prison. Lives are changed; hearts are filled with love instead of selfishness. Connections to the Christian community are made new and restored. Men who have experienced Kairos are changed and will look back to that experience as a big turning point in their lives and your gifts, people of Palmer, help to sustain this vital ministry of the Church. God is good! All the time.

Our training for a Kairos weekend will begin approximately eight weeks prior, when we will meet for several hours on a Saturday. We will meet every other Saturday for three Saturdays with the fourth time being at the host Church for the weekend. By the time the weekend is here, we are like a well oiled machine. Everyone knows exactly what their role is and what is to be done. Many people on the “Inside Team” are also cross trained so that anyone can pitch in and do another person’s job.

In 2015, we went to the Carol Vance Unit three weekends ~ in March, June, and October. These weekends start on Thursday afternoon with the “Outside Team” doing the shopping for the groceries and the setting up. On Friday, the “Inside Team” arrives and will go into the Unit to meet with the 42 Men in White who have been selected for the weekend. Those from Palmer who were actively involved in all of these week-ends were Carole Mather, David Mather and Pat Robson. We have other Palmers who help out as schedule permits.

*Profoundly grateful,*

*Carole & David Mather, the Rev’ d John Price, Pat Robson*

## **Music at Palmer**

The Music Department of Palmer Church is a vibrant and thriving ministry which involves children, youth, undergraduate and graduate college students, and adults from all walks of life. In June of 2015 the choirs toured New Orleans, Louisiana, singing the morning and evening services at historic Christ Church Cathedral. The tour was led by Brady Knapp, Director of Music and Organist Ken Cowan. Last Spring the Adult Choir hosted a Dinner Theater and fund raiser to help offset the costs of summer touring. “A Night in Old New Orleans” featured pop, jazz and Broadway show tunes, a delicious Cajun-inspired dinner, and was a lot of fun! Members of the Adult Choir and Palmer’s St. Andrews Kitchen Guild joined forces to prepare and serve the meal.

Former Head of the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston and Associate Professor of Composition Dr. David Ashley White, who is a long term Palmer parishioner, was named Palmer’s first “Composer-in-Residence” in 2015. The composer stipend and title was made possible by a generous anonymous gift from a faithful Palmer parishioner who is also an avid music supporter. Dr. White has since written three new anthems for the choirs which have been published by E.C. Schirmer and Selah - highly respected American music publishers. We welcomed Eric Murillo, Coordinator of Palmer Children’s Choirs, who has brought tremendous energy, structure, joy and expertise to our singing children and youth. Along with his work at Palmer, Eric is a Choir Director for the Spring Branch Girl Choir and he is the Vocal/Choral Music Specialist for Terrace Elementary (SBISD) and a Kodaly certified Music Educator. Eric is a confirmed Episcopalian who deeply values liturgy and music and was formerly the Choirmaster of St Andrew’s Episcopal Church in the Heights.

Our very fine organists Ken Cowan and Yuri McCoy gave excellent solo organ concerts during Lent of 2015, and our Palmer Sacred Arts Interns and Staff Singers presented a concert of Sacred Solo Music with organist/conductor Thomas Jaber, Associate Professor of Choral Studies and a Voice Coach at Rice University. The Palmer Adult Choir offered four Evensong services during the year (three at Palmer and one on tour), the Faure

Requiem for All Souls, and the always popular and multi-generational annual Advent Lessons and Carols service. Many thanks go to Johnna Kincaid, Carolyn Baker, Martha Bersch, and others who graciously helped to organize a wonderful reception for the parish after Lessons and Carols which was an awesome time for fellowship (and included festive Eggnog!). The St. Gregory choir combined with the Spring Branch Girl Choir on All Saints Sunday to offer a wonderful Choral Evensong to the parish.

On Christmas Eve of 2015 a beautiful new grand piano was delivered to the choir room. The piano is a gift to the parish made possible by generous gifts given by parishioner Ruth Davies in honor of her late husband David Davies (former beloved Palmer chorister) and Dr. Jan Conklin in honor of her late husband Dr. Richard Conklin. There will be Chamber music concert featuring the new hand-crafted Shigeru Kawai piano, and we are very to honored to be adding a plaque to memorialize David Davies and Richard Conklin to the choir room later in 2016. We look forward to a very full 2016 which includes the Palmer Organ and Nave being featured as a major venue for the American Guild of Organists National Convention which will be held in Houston in June.

*Submitted by: Dr. Brady Knapp, Director of Music*

### **Palmer Creative Artist Community**

The Palmer Creative Artist Community has hosted continuous shows throughout the year in the Fra Angelico Gallery. We have branched out to include the art of three other Houston churches in our Art for the City Exhibit and the creations of two Turkish artists.

Our group urges, supports, and gives a forum for artists in our community to do what God made us to do --- to create.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Jackie Campbell and Sherry Byrd*

### **Palmer Eucharistic Visitors**

The role of this ministry is to share and connect the worship and community of our weekly communion with those who cannot be present with us in church. A group of Lay Eucharistic Ministers, selected and overseen by the clergy, takes Holy Communion to the hospitalized and homebound following services on Sunday mornings. 163 visits for private home communion were made in 2015. Deacons Linda Shelton and Alex Easley worked with clergy, staff and parishioners to identify Palmers who, whether on a regular or temporary basis, received a Eucharistic visit. Suzie Dennis, as Coordinator of Palmer's Medical Center Ministries, identifies non-Palmers who would appreciate a visit; these are most often active members of other Episcopal parishes and dioceses who are in Houston for medical treatment and are very grateful for our ministry. Ruth Davies serves as Palmer Pastoral Care Coordinator in the fall and helps us make sure parishioners are visited and cared for as needed.

Thad Lueders served again as scheduling coordinator for Eucharistic Visitors and we are grateful for her ministry.

Eucharistic Visitors do not attempt to counsel or help with practical issues, but they do make reports following their visits to indicate if there are any emergency issues or if referrals to other ministries might be appropriate. We hope parishioners will let us know when they or someone they know might benefit from this very special ministry of connection to our worship and Palmer community.

*Faithfully,  
The Rev. Linda Shelton, Deacon*

## Palmer Medical Center Ministry

Palmer Medical Center Ministry continues to reach out to Non-Palmer patients who are in the Texas Medical Center for treatment. In order to know who those patients are we are dependent on Palmers, former patients and/or their families, other Episcopal churches, or anyone who contacts us about a patient who could benefit from our help. We believe our location at the northern edge of the TMC uniquely positions us to reach out to these patients who are strangers who often have very complicated issues. Our pastoral ministries can offer much needed spiritual and practical support. The tender care our ministries offer has been a lifeline to most of these patients. We have connected with patients from not only Texas, but also Hawaii and most of the lower 48. We bring them Holy Communion, offer rides for appointments and/or shopping, provide housing for a modest fee, give spiritual companionship, prayer, and offer our Wednesday evening Healing Service. Many of our patients and their families even attend Palmer while they are here if they are able. We continue to receive notes of thanksgiving from them and often maintain relationships long after they have returned home.

*Suzie Dennis*

*Palmer Medical Center Ministry Coordinator*

## Palmer Refugee Resettlement Ministry

In the Spring, Palmer completed the co-sponsorship begun in December 2014 of the resettlement of an Eritrean mother and child and began preparing for the arrival of another family. Donations of gently used furniture, housewares and toys were gladly accepted from the parish in anticipation of the arrival of a new family. As the world refugee crisis developed last summer, and as diocesan partners with Episcopal Migration Ministries and Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, we advocated for continued humanitarian support of welcome and resettlement of refugees in the US and in our diocese this fall. We shared our past experiences of welcoming, supporting and mentoring refugees with other churches newly interested in supporting refugee ministry. Frances Vonk wrote an article on parish co-sponsorship for the December issue of the DioLog, our diocesan magazine, which focused on refugee ministry. And we waited for the opportunity to welcome and co-sponsor another arriving family.

We have just learned that we will be given the opportunity to co-sponsor a family from Congo in late winter and we will possibly share this ministry with another Episcopal Church, collaborating to provide the best possible start for this family and to introduce this church to new opportunities in refugee ministry. Announcements will be made immediately inviting all parishioners to share in this ministry—helping with move-in, airport welcome, school enrollments, transportation, employment possibilities, fieldtrips to acquaint them with their new city, language lessons, mentoring and social occasions—so watch for them in the Flash and announcement sheets.

We are excited about this opportunity and are grateful to this parish for your support and generosity and we invite you to join us in reaching out to refugees in welcome.

*Respectfully,*

*Francis Vonk, Chairperson*

## Scouting At Palmer

Scouting has a solid presence at Palmer Church. We have Girl Scouts, led by our own Maria Wehrung; Cub Scout Pack 511, led by Brandon Moncla; and Boy Scout Troop 511, Elliott Ballard II, Scoutmaster. Parishioners will see them all represented on February 7th at the 9am service, as that is Scout Sunday for Palmer Church.

Troop 511 was formed in the Fall of 2008, and since that time, 54 boys have registered as Scouts in that Troop. Of those, 17 have earned the Eagle Scout rank! That is a 33.3 % “Eagle Rate.” The average rate in the Boy Scouts of America nation-wide is only 6% ! We have an outstanding Troop. There are a few reasons our Eagle Rate is so great: parents are heavily involved, it’s a small troop so there can be hands-on help for the Scouts,



and we stress that the parents are involved because they love their children and the Scouts are there to love each other. The older scouts help the younger scouts extensively.

One of the unusual features about our Troop is that it is quadriracial, even among the leadership. Additionally, very few of the Scouts are members of Palmer Church, so Scouting at Palmer is a serious outreach program.

We have a campout every month, even on cold, rainy weekends. Our Scouts learn to deal with many challenges, including bad weather.

*Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. John W. Price  
Charter Organization Representative  
Chaplain, Pack 511 and Troop 511*

## **Saint Andrews Guild**

During 2015, The Saint Andrews Guild prepared and offered over 2300 meals to the Palmer community. When there was extra food, the Guild provided more than 200 complimentary meals to the sextons, guards and nursery staff that support Great Wednesdays. We also donated leftovers to the Way Station.

Diners averaged about 91 people a night. However, the actual numbers vary a great deal. In 2015 our high night was 115 diners and our low was 55, a 60 person difference. While there is a general downward trend of fewer diners over the semester, each week is different. There seems to be no discernible weekly pattern across months or years. Some weeks we run out of food and other weeks we lose money.

We continue to charge \$5. Overall we make a little money each semester. The small income we do bring in goes back to the church community through buying of kitchen supplies, dishes, pots and pans, cutlery, tools, tablecloths, equipment maintenance and repair, etc. For example, this year we bought Palmer logo coffee mugs.

Chefs are responsible for creating menus, buying food stuff and staffing the endeavor with volunteers from the Guild. Our meals represent cuisines from a variety of regions, e.g. Louisiana, China, India, France, Italy, Mexico, and Texas. Given the unpredictability of attendance and budget tightness, chefs are challenged to be economical, flexible and creative. No meals would happen without the work of guild members taking on the roles of sous chefs, servers and cashiers.

Great Wednesday nourishes and sustains the Palmer community. There is wisdom having choir practice, worship and classes together on one night and supported by the sharing of a good meal. On Great Wednesdays, Palmer pulls a variety of people to the church and by nourishing body, mind and spirit builds and strengthens the bonds of our community.

*David Veale*

## **Star of Hope**

Star of Hope is our new outreach to the homeless following the closing of the Way Station. The Star of Hope has many volunteer opportunities at three different locations. Currently, we have Palmers serving breakfast once a week, tutoring, sending cards of encouragement to Star of Hope clients, and participating in other ways. It has been a slow start though; and, we would like to see more volunteer support. The Star of Hope is now offering a faster way for Palmers to get connected to its programs. As we start to understand the procedures, opportunities and programs better, we hope more Palmers will volunteer this year. For more information on Star of Hope, go to [www.sohmission.org](http://www.sohmission.org).

*Connie Wallace  
Vestry Liaison to Serve Vessel*

## Sts. Mary and Martha Altar Guild

The purpose of Sts. Mary and Martha Altar Guild is to prepare our church for services that are beautiful and orderly so that worshippers will not be distracted from their worship of God.

Preparing for worship involves the purchase, preparation, cleaning and care of furnishings for the services (wine, wafers, linens, candles, brass and silver, altar hangings, vestments, and decorations), setting out everything that is needed for services and clean-up after services. Along with Palmer's six regular Eucharist's per week, we are also responsible for preparation of all special services, such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, and Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter services. These services may take place in any of our four worship spaces: the Nave, St. Bede's Chapel, Holy Cross Chapel or the Columbarium.

JR Porter, Altar Guild Director, coordinates guild activities. Glenn Turner, as head of the Worship Committee, is our liaison. Jeanine Baker is our Encounter Vessel Leader. The group is divided into four weekly teams headed by Kathy Herrin (first week), Vickie Harshbarger (second week), Carole Tabor (third week), and Cornelia Williams (fourth week). These teams are responsible for the coordination of everything that takes place during their week. The Altar Guild rotates duties for all 5th week Sundays.

Cornelia Williams stepped down from the guild in late 2015 after many years of dedicated service. The guild deeply appreciates all of her assistance, leadership and continued support. We are eternally grateful for her participation. Linda Bracey is an assistant wedding coordinators and acts as the Altar Guild's liaison to the Wedding Guild. Helen Toombs is our supply chairman who inventories, orders, purchases, and delivers supplies. We also work closely with the Funeral Guild who are also Altar Guild members; Vickie Harshbarger, Ann Pittman. Our group of regular members numbered approximately 30 this year. In addition, there are several honorary members and several "Ad Hoc" members who are unable to help in traditional ways, but help us with special projects.

The Guild volunteers for several parish-wide duties, such as serving twice a year at Great Wednesday dinners, and Meet on the Patio receptions.

The Altar Guild hosts a Book Club for its members as an extracurricular activity and a chance to socialize. It is held every other month at the home of one of the guild members. We also host at least one luncheon/training session per year to welcome and train new members.

This year, the guild was able to purchase a new set of light-weight green Chasubles for use during the warmer summer months. This purchase was made possible by a generous donation of a Palmer parishioner for which we are truly grateful.

Working quietly behind the scenes, Altar Guild members preform their sacred duties with a special love and respect for the symbols and sacraments of our faith and worship. Being a member of the guild is a commitment of time and self. It is a labor of love that we preform gladly as a way of giving thanks to God for all that has, so generously, been given to us. We thank you for allowing us to serve and help enhance the beautiful liturgy that identifies Palmer.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*JR Porter, Director*

## Ushers

The usher teams maintained their normal four week rotation throughout the year with each team covering the extra Sunday in each Quarter corresponding with that team's regular rotation. Each team attempted to maintain a roster of at least four members with two having more.

In addition to the normal logistical duties involved with directing the flow of communicants the teams presented the welcoming face of Palmer and attempted to identify those attendees who were newcomers and give them special attention. We also tried to have them introduced to either the Greeters or the Clergy outside after the service. The first impression that a first time visitor has of the congregation has a lot to do with their decision to return.

We alternated duties with the 9:00 ushers for the services that were combined for special occasions and manned a six week stretch of the 10:00 combined summer services while the 9:00 teams covered the additional six.

We believe that ushering provides a great way for new Palmers to become integrated into our community and by joining an usher team it will allow them to meet existing members of the congregation and become familiar with the services while being shepherded by long term members. We welcome any newcomers sent our way especially from the Connections Class. The Ushers in concert with the Greeters present the first face of Palmer and that evangelism is most important to growing the congregation.

*Kirk Waldron*

## **Walking The Mourners' Path Grief Ministry**

Walking the Mourner's Path, an eight week small group offering support for those grieving the death of a loved one, whether family member, neighbor, co-worker or friend, has been offered at Palmer since 2006. Each group is facilitated by two trained persons and a clergy member is present as well. Jeanine Baker, Betty Key, and Sue Hamblen served as our facilitators this year, and Linda Shelton serves as clergy and is also a trained facilitator. The groups are open to our larger community as a pastoral outreach of our parish.

We continued our practice of sending a letter, information brochure and booklet of meditations to those in our parish whom we learn have experienced the death of a loved one. A session was held in the fall of 2015 with eight participants and a new session is planned to begin in February of 2016.

We are grateful for the opportunity to be present with and walk alongside people on this very special path. Please contact any of us for more information.

*Faithfully,*

*The Rev. Linda Shelton, Deacon*

## **Way Station**

After 24 years of ministry and having served over one million breakfasts to our homeless and hungry neighbors, the Way Station closed August 28th this year and announced our new support of Star of Hope, a Christian ministry supporting the homeless in Houston for over a century with several locations and plans for another new ministry site in the future.

The Way Station Steering Committee and Vestry made this decision after over two years of consultation with other homeless ministry providers, major stakeholders, funders, neighboring institutions, the Coalition for the Homeless and the City of Houston regarding challenges within our ministry and our desire to partner with them in new programs to end homelessness. The Way Home ([www.thewayhomehouston.org](http://www.thewayhomehouston.org)), is a new collaborative program in the city which provides housing and coordinated services to those in need of permanent solutions. While the Way Station served many through its years of service, we are grateful for these new transformational programs, resources and ministries to better the lives of many. We look forward to supporting The Way Home in the future and will seek new ways to support its partner organizations, especially Star of Hope, in serving the needs of the homeless and hungry in Houston.

We are grateful to this parish for your support and generosity and we invite you to join us in reaching out to refugees in welcome.

*Respectfully,*

*The Rev. Linda Shelton, Deacon*

## Wedding Coordinators

This year the wedding coordinators are Wendy Robertson, Jeanine Baker, Sondra Maxfield and Ragna Case.

As Palmer representatives, these coordinators work in pairs, in concert with the priest performing the marriage, to guide the bride and groom in scheduling and in attending to the details of their wedding ceremony at Palmer. Attention is given to the requirements for marriage in the Episcopal Church and laws of the State of Texas, with emphasis on the solemn and sacred nature of marriage in the Church. Within appropriate boundaries, every effort is made to ensure that all the wedding needs of the bride and groom are met, and that everything goes smoothly on the wedding day.

Other ministries who contribute greatly in this effort are the Altar Guild, the Acolyte Corps, the Bell Ringers, the sextants, and our Music Ministry. We would especially like to thank Jr Porter and Linda Bracey (Altar Guild), Suzanne Miller (Acolytes), Allen Nunley and Lynsey Slavonic (Bell Ringers), Brady Knapp and Yuri McCoy (Music Ministry) and Jimmy Perrales (Sextants) for their wonderful spirit of cooperation and willingness to coordinate the contribution of each of their ministries. Also, a special thank you to Sue Howard for her guidance, and assistance with the church calendar and Dustin Jesudason (Publications Editor) for his fine work on the wedding leaflets. We, the wedding coordinators, greatly appreciate their gracious and proactive support.

There were 8 wedding ceremonies performed by Palmer clergy in 2015, 5 of which were held at Palmer (Fr. Willard - 1, Fr. Brooks - 3, and Rev. Wallingford - 1), and three at other locations (Fr. Brooks - 2 and Fr. Price - 1). There are currently 9 weddings on the calendar for 2016.

*Wendy Robertson, Jeanine Baker, Sondra Maxfield and Ragna Case*

## The Wemmicks

The Wemmicks is a support group of caregivers who care for their elderly parents or loved ones. We provide a warm, caring environment where confidentiality is assured to those who may desire assistance and support in caring for their family members. We meet on a quarterly basis at Palmer Church following the 11:00 a.m. service.

*The Rev'd Linda Shelton*

## Women's Spirituality Group

The women of WSG have been together for about 20 years; we formed with the help of the Rev'd Maribeth Conroy. Through the years we have developed a community in which we have supported each other, and the mission of Palmer church. Each woman has at one time or another belonged to one or more ministries at Palmer, depending on her spiritual gifts.

We study and pray together through many and varied theological books in our search for God's place in our lives. We also laugh together at life's strange and wonderful ways.

I do believe that each of us is fed by this group of faithful women. We have two retreats a year: a day retreat in Advent at the home of a member, and an overnight lenten retreat at a nearby retreat house. The group is open to all women of Palmer Church. We meet on Mondays, 12:45- 2:30; bring a lunch.

*Eleanor Viebig*

## Worship Committee

Consists of representatives of Acolytes, Vergers, Lectors, Chalice Bearers (Lay Eucharistic Ministers or LEMs), Ushers, Music, Altar Guild, Clergy, Flower Guild, and Wedding Coordination.

Working with the clergy it oversees the services offered during the year.

Meetings are on an “as needed” basis and when held normally are in the Chancery at 5:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month. Meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend.

Dub Brooks and Linda Shelton are the clergy representatives. We thank them for their efforts to improve our liturgy.

The worship committee continues to sponsor a series of lector workshops held by Caroline Baker. All lectors are expected to attend an annual workshop.

The worship committee worked with Michael Massey as he refined the process of preparing the liturgical schedule. We thank Michael for his efforts and success in bringing some order to a chaotic system. The schedule includes Vergers, Acolytes, Lectors, LEMs, Ushers and Greeters.

We have a group of wonderfully dedicated men, women, boys, and girls who love to serve our Lord Jesus Christ on the altar in church through various acolyte roles - Thurifer, Crucifers, Server, and Torches. Thanks to all the acolytes for their loyal, outstanding service.

We currently have over 35 individuals serving in this ministry and would love for you to join us.

If you would like more information about this ministry, please contact the following individuals - Margie French ([mmfrench@rice.edu](mailto:mmfrench@rice.edu)) for youth acolytes and Victor Lamas ([jvlama1@gmail.com](mailto:jvlama1@gmail.com)) for adult acolytes.

*Submitted by Glenn Turner*

## **Yellowstone Academy**

Yellowstone Academy is a non-profit non-denominational Christian private school located in the Fifth Ward. The school's mission is to educate very poor students. The typical student lives in a household with an average annual income of \$10,000.00. Palmer has provided school supplies, snack donations, and volunteer support in the past, and we hope to identify new means of support this year. We thank Anne Warner for her leadership and support of Palmer's ministry to Yellowstone and now welcome Jane Strickland to this position, with support from Ann Whitehead.

We will resume collecting donations for the children at Yellowstone Academy on the 3rd Sunday of every month. We will be requesting donations of individually wrapped cookies, fruit snacks, crackers and goldfish crackers, other snack items and will highlight a featured item each month to encourage support. Donations can be brought to Sunday services and placed in baskets in the Narthex or brought anytime to the front desk in the reception area. We will use donated funds to purchase canned goods to stock the pantry at the school for children needing meals on weekends.

Volunteers are also needed for fieldtrips and other special events. Many opportunities are available and we welcome your involvement and ideas. For more information, please contact Jane Strickland at [jane33strickland@att.net](mailto:jane33strickland@att.net) Thank you for your support!

*Jane Strickland*

## **Young Adults at Palmer**

The Young Adults at Palmer group provides a welcoming and diverse home for the up-and-coming, members of the congregation in their 20's and 30's. Long a tradition at Palmer, the group has undergone a transformative shift with formal clergy involvement by Rev. Alex Easley. With her guidance, this ministry has adopted a formal calendar of events which is updated semi-annually and caters to the broad range of interests of today's young adults.

Some highlights of the year include:

- Re-launch of the Young Adults at Palmer Facebook page
- Fall Fiesta celebration
- Monthly Dinner and Discussion meetings
- Monthly Sunday Brunch meetings



In 2015 we revamped our webpage and Facebook page and have revitalized our efforts to reach out to young adults in the congregation and help Palmer overall meet its goals of attracting and retaining new members. To start things off on the right foot we organized a “Fall Fiesta” barbecue cookout on the patio, which brought all of the Young Adults at Palmer together in concert with members of the vestry and other laypeople. The success of this event, made possible by the concerted efforts of Young Adults at Palmer Leaders and Rev. Alex Easley, laid the groundwork for later successes.

We were successful in attracting new faces to the brunches and dinners and our goal is to continue this trend into 2016. Going forward, we expect that the Sunday Brunches will help encourage fellowship among young adults and the Dinner and Discussion meetings will help foster discussions among young adults about how God fits into their modern lives. It is our intent to encourage this sort of discourse as well as potentially broaden our ministry to include some form of outreach and cooperation with other ministries.

We would like to thank the Clergy, Vestry, and congregation for their continued support and we look forward to learning and growing in 2016!

*Joseph Dante Santos*

## **Youth Task Force**

Youth Task Force: Courtney Daniell-Knapp, chair, Jennifer Enos, Margie French, Megan Henry, Stuart Kensington, Betty Key, Kristie Van Arsdell, Steven Vaughan, Olivia Wehrung, Sasha McClean, Archway Academy (consultant).

Parents, grandparents and professionals who work with youth are serving on the Youth Task Force. The aim of the Youth Task Force is two-fold: to support Roger Hutchison in his first year of ministry at Palmer and to work together with Roger to define the best leadership model for youth going forward.

We supported the Diocesan Assessment with our participation and consideration of the results. The April Assessment brought two diocesan staff members to campus for three days for observation, participation and discussion groups to assess the strengths and challenges for our youth and children’s programs. The tone of those who participated in the survey and interviews was hopeful. The report noted that Palmer is poised for renewed health and strength in its children’s and youth programs.

During the summer, we welcomed Roger and his family to Houston. We hosted events to introduce Roger to the parish, provided support for VBS and for recruitment of youth Sunday school teachers and EYC leaders.

In the fall, the task force provided hospitality for the EYC kick-off and the Advent Dinner. In January, task force members will host youth Bible Studies in their homes.

Our theological and practical discussions about the direction of the youth program have stressed intergenerational ministry to and with youth. We recognize that Palmer youth need to build community with each other and with church members who can be spiritual guides in their lives. We are working to build a strong team of parishioners to support our youth in their faith lives.

Roger’s leadership over the children and youth programs has been patient, joyful and founded in respectful relationships. Roger is clear that Palmer does not need to rush decisions related to personnel. He has reminded us that Palmer may not have a staff member to serve as a youth minister, but Palmer has youth ministers. In the new year, he will add his voice as a Senior high Sunday school teacher and will lead a youth Bible study.

This youth ministry effort is being shepherded by the Rev. Alex Easley, who leads the Wednesday night Touchstone gatherings and attends EYC events. Although not a part of her official assignment, Alex has a heart for youth and young adults. In the new year, she will lead a discussion series on sensitive topics that matter to them.

*Courtney Daniell-Knapp*

