

Warden's Corner**Working and Worshiping Together**

St. Andrew's. It's a house of worship, a community of people and an organization with a mission. Let's consider for a moment how the three fit together. For many of us St. Andrew's is first and foremost a place to come worship on Sunday: a place to connect with God and thank Him for our blessings, to seek strength to wrestle with our difficulties, a place to pause and catch our spiritual breath, a place to pray about mid-course corrections we might want to make on our life's journey. Indeed, as Holy Week and Easter come upon us, worship will be paramount.



At the same time lots of us spend much more time working at the church than we do worshiping. That's the *community of people* aspect. I was reminded of that side of St. Andrew's at the vestry retreat in March when we discussed all the many committees that tend to the life of the church: finance, buildings & grounds, stewardship, adult and children's education and outreach, to name a few. Last week's Spaghetti Dinner & Auction also reminded me of how strong our community is—we enjoyed a great evening of fun, food and fellowship—and as we built bonds of friendship, we also raised money for the church. What could be better than that!

As for *mission*, we are out there bringing God's love to the world every day. At its March meeting the vestry approved support for the Bishops' Fund for Children, our orphans in Uganda, and our youth mission trips to the Dominican Republic and Niagara Falls. And at that same meeting, and somewhat closer to home, Art Criddle offered a personal witness of his appreciation for our Loaves & Fishes program, which provided food for him and his wife Linda when they were recovering from hospital stays. In February Marty Gerst led a small crew in helping build a Habitat for Humanity house in New Haven, and Brenda Naegel and Joe Burbela "Bowled Over Hunger" and collected some 555 pounds of food.

But back to my original question: how do these three pieces fit together? Let's think about worship. Sunday in the pew is an intensely personal experience, unique and different for each of us. But for me being among a community of fellow worshippers, people I know, is a critical element. Once in awhile when I am out of town I will visit the local church (Episcopal, of course), and while the liturgy is familiar, worshiping there is never as uplifting as worshiping at St. Andrew's. No matter how warmly I am greeted, I always feel a bit of a stranger. Somehow praying, singing, sharing bread and wine together with people I know and love makes a huge difference. Paradoxically, though, it's not on Sundays in the sanctuary that those bonds of friendship develop. No, in my case they develop tussling over the right tone for a stewardship letter, planning an adult ed program, taking eucharist to one of our homebound parishioners. And each of you will have your own story, based on the community of people you work with you as you volunteer your time and talent. In short, we get to know each other working together, playing together, and those bonds enrich our worship when we come together on Sunday.

Is there a lesson here? Absolutely: get involved! Join the altar guild, become an usher, sign on to help with the June picnic. You will get to know your fellow parishioners, you will become more a part of the St. Andrew's community, you will enrich your spiritual life.

John Armstrong