



Church of Our Saviour

Continuing History

1995 to 2008

Upon the occasion of a rector's retirement it is customary to review the years of service and to update our history. As in the past, I have interviewed our retiring rector and a number of parishioners while preparing these notes. I have also maintained tradition by not mentioning parishioners by name. We have so many faithful and able people in all aspects of our church that I will need to mention all or omit some one of merit. Dear reader, please insert your name in the proper places.

In 1997, after two years of interim leadership, we called the Rev. Linda Packard to be our first woman rector. She was also the first woman rector in the City of Chicago. Linda, as she likes to be called, has many first's to her credit. She was the first woman priest to serve on the prestigious Standing Committee of the Diocese. Shortly after becoming our rector, she was called to be Dean of the North Chicago Deanery. Two years ago she was appointed Co-chair of the Diocesan Bishop Search Committee. Throughout the years, she has encouraged a close relationship between the diocese and COS.

1997 brought Linda to a church with many strengths and a long and varied history. Founded in 1867, it had weathered the years with three church buildings, twelve rectors and many financial and membership ups and downs. For 3 years in the 1940s, it was reduced to mission status. It became a parish again in 1945 but was still low in members and finances.

From 1965 to 1995 COS enjoyed the guidance of one rector, and during these years, it grew from a small impoverished parish to a prosperous church with a strong spiritual life and a good working relationship with the community. In 1997, many parishioners still remember the days when Fr. Reed held house masses, pails had to go under leaks in the ceiling of the church when it rained. They also remembered the close ties of hospitality and friendship which included new members as well as old. COS moved rather quickly from a family church to a pastoral church. As the membership grew and activities expanded, we repaired and rebuilt our beautiful church buildings. We purchased and installed a bell for the steeple and a new organ. We accepted a new prayer book and a new hymnal. We elected a female warden and facilitated the ordination of one of the first women priests in Chicago.



We joined other churches in the community assisting the homeless by providing two hot lunches a week during the winter. We participated joyfully in the Park West Antiques Fair, not only to raise money, but also to enjoy the fellowship of working together to make it successful. With other nearby clergy, we provided a refuge for frightened young people during the 1968 convention riots. We gave a series of operettas and plays which provided some income, but, more importantly, involved us with the community and attracted creative people to join our congregation. We planned and executed a yearly mission trip to Appalachia. Young people from COS and other churches traveled with adult assistance to repair houses for less fortunate families. We donated money to various Chicago charities both inside and outside the Diocesan family.

By 1997 COS had become a program church both in size and in the number of diverse and successful programs. However, most parishioners were unaware of the change and not ready to welcome it. Throughout the coming years, despite successful activities there was an underlying fear that becoming too large a church might threaten our closeness and friendly ties. We also still felt the loss of Fr. Reed. It was not an easy assignment for our new rector. Linda's early days were trying because the rectory was under repair and the Packard furniture and belongings had a long rest in the parish house. She had and still has the loving support of her husband, Tony.

He has become a staunch member of the parish and a strong voice in the choir. Adding to the trauma of her early days was an unhappy teenage son who mourned the loss of his friends and his home. We all remember, some time later, when these feelings finally healed. Tom joined the Appalachia Mission and gave part of the return sermon to express his newfound happiness at COS. Who can forget his introductory sentence, "I think you all know my mother."

At the beginning of her rectorship, Linda saw us as a program church. She worked to help us continue to grow both in size and in the acceptance of new ideas. Her vision was a church where "priest and people gather around the altar." She has a gift for selecting able staff, apparent at once in her appointing of the Rev. Brian Hastings as assistant. Subsequently she selected youth ministers, curates and a parish administrator, all of the highest quality.



Under Linda, many of our traditional programs continued and flourished. More people were trained and involved in the Catechism of the Good Shepard. They spread the training to other parishes and became known as excellent teachers to help other churches use the Catechism in their Sunday School. Our Youth group had regular meetings and projects and attracted young people from other churches. Food for Friends was as strong as ever, providing hot lunches twice a week during the winter and sandwiches and dessert during the summer. We added the weekly services of the DePaul Nursing Health Clinic and the foot clinic for other kinds of help to those in need of care.

The youth Mission to repair homes continues with great success, moving from Appalachia to Mississippi after the devastating hurricane, Katrina. We continued to participate in the Park West Antique Fair until the community closed it. We looked for an activity to replace it and had a highly successful book fair in 2007. A bazaar was held for 2 years but was discontinued.

We joined other nearby churches in opposing an attempt to close the Lincoln Park Shelter for the homeless. The shelter was preserved, but the relationship with some of our neighbors has suffered.

Returning from a vacation and later from a sabbatical, Linda encouraged us to become involved with more distant communities. We gained some insight into the plight of Christians and Palestinians in Israel and the oppression suffered by the natives of Burma. COS responded to the later by contributing money to fund a nursery school in a village in Burma. Some of our parishioners undertake their own missions to Central America and the Caribbean.

During the past 11 years, with encouragement from Linda, the lay leadership in our church has increased significantly. Currently we have a sizeable group of trained lay ministers who serve at the altar and take communion to the homebound. EFM has become an ongoing program led by trained parishioners. Two parish members were encouraged to become trained spiritual directors and they have served at a monthly meeting called "WomenSpirits".

Three aspiring priests and an aspiring deacon have been encouraged and assisted as they pursued their theological education.

We have assisted the training of other seminarians and post graduates including two curates sponsored by the Lily foundation.

Our church buildings have been modernized by adding air conditioning and a sound system. Installing two ramps and a small elevator has made the church and parish hall handicapped accessible. The entrance to the

narthex was completely refurbished in honor of a deceased parishioner. Permanent walls were installed in the basement of the parish house and the nursery has been updated.

We began a large project to beautify our church. Many parishioners and their friends and family members are creating needlepoint covers for our kneelers. The designs are original and are meant to repeat and harmonize with the Victorian stained glass windows. Thanks to the hard work of many hands and the generosity of a parishioner, almost 100 kneelers have been completed and are currently in use.

All of our usual services have continued and we have added a Sunday evening mass. Tuesday night service includes healing, and we give special prayers for healing in our Sunday 10:30 mass. We have also added a monthly Evening Prayer Service at the Ivy Retirement home. The well being of our parishioners has always been a deep concern. A 'casserole cavalry' prepares and delivers food to shut-ins. Linda is a conscientious and cheerful hospital visitor as are her other staff members.

COS has always attracted young couples contemplating marriage, and it takes a lot of work for the rector to plan, perform and counsel. It is an opportunity to help a young couple take some special thought about their future life and particularly their spiritual life.



Linda was very aware of the importance of counseling pre-marital couples and also families requesting baptisms. Gradually she devised and planned, with the help of her staff, a marriage preparation weekend shared by several couples. Preparation for families planning Baptisms was equally well served. She gave much time and energy to both of these weekend programs for their future welfare of the families, and if one also gained new parishioners as a result, it is counted as righteousness to her.

So it has been a very busy and blessed eleven years to add to our history at COS. As in the past, we have had our good times and difficult times. She leaves us united in our Christian life, enjoying our friendships and intimacy to welcome our next vicar.

Wilda J. Dailey
Church Historian