

January 24, 2010

*“For God is not unjust; he will not overlook
your work and the love that you showed for
his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.”
-Hebrews 6:10*

It is my joy to present to Gary Birdwell the Christ Episcopal Church DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD for 2009. Gary, you join an extraordinary group of individuals who, since 1975 when this award was started, share this honor. Even though a “staff member” has never received this award before, there is no question but that you deserve this distinction for the many ways you have selflessly, boldly and generously served the needs of this Christ Church family.

In your position as Parish Administrator you have assembled and cared for a church staff that is truly outstanding. You have reminded us over and over again that our jobs are more than jobs, but opportunities to affect God’s Kingdom. You have watched over and protected the financial interests of Christ Church by insisting that we live within our means, that we have absolute integrity in our handling of the stewardship entrusted to us, and by developing budgets that reflect our mission-minded priorities. You have served as project manager for the renovations, special projects and countless repairs over the years. And you have handled complaints about bird poop and trash in the parking lot with respect and grace. And, not least of all, you have been a loyal friend and advisor to this rector through good and hard times in ways no one else in this parish knows.

I will never forget the day you spread trash in the hallways to see if the staff and/or parishioners would pick it up. I will never forget your anguish of having to decide how to cut staff hours and positions during the financial crisis of 2008. And I will never forget your patience with me, when inside (I’m sure) you were screaming: “How can this guy be so starry-eyed about such obvious things?!”

One of Christ Church’s core values states, “We center our faith and worship on the fullest revelation of God in his Son Jesus Christ.” Gary I see Christ in you and thank God for sending you to us. Today we recognize and give thanks for your Christ-centered spirit among us.

Respectfully yours,

The Rev. Charles B. Collins
Rector