

# Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

by Tom Carney

More than 250 people filled St Mark's Episcopal Church to join in Interfaith Action of Evanston's 17th annual Thanksgiving Eve Service. The musical prelude by the St Mark's choir set the theme for the evening, reminding us of the one spirit who hears the cries of all in need. Representatives of Evanston's Unity, Jewish, Presbyterian, Ethical Humanist, Hindu, Friends and Catholic faith communities then rose to share the spirit of thanksgiving and community that ties us together and to those we serve.

Rev. Bret Lortie, senior minister of the Unitarian Church of Evanston, delivered the evening's message: "*One More Step, The Power of Interfaith Work.*" Drawing on his

early experience as a community organizer, Rev. Lortie explored the transition from the traditional focus on anger to gratitude as a motivation for change. Anger gives way to optimism, to do the right thing simply because it is the right thing to do. Organizing and advocacy are about bringing people together based on common interests. and the religious community may be the best place to start. Understanding the commonalities among belief systems makes us an even more powerful interfaith voice for justice.

After brief remarks by IAE President Birch Burghardt, reminding all of the work IAE does to support the needs of the hungry and homeless, volunteers from Evanston's diverse faith communities

joined the St Mark's choir to sing "Creator of the Intertwined." It again reminded each of us that the force who made us all unique, speaks many languages, just one of which is mine.

Following what has become this event's traditional rendering of "This is My Song," the celebration concluded with the closing prayer delivered by Rev. Debra K. Bullock.

In keeping with the spirit of inclusiveness, the entire service was made available to the hearing impaired by American Sign Language interpreter Cathy Silvern. After the service, all gathered for refreshments and fellowship before venturing back into the world, buoyed by the warmth of the spirit that unites rather than divides.