

Rector's Annual Report for 2004

Steadfastness "...which yieldeth the true glory"

O Lord God, when thou givest thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory; through him that for the finishing of thy work laid down his life, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is a wonderful prayer. A prayer for steadfastness - for 'sticking-with-it' in the face of dangers and difficulties. It is the prayer of Sir Francis Drake while contemplating the approach of the Spanish Armada towards the shores of England in 1588, intending the invasion of England and the end of the Elizabethan Settlement in matters of religion and politics. It is a prayer which you can find in *The Book of Common Prayer* in the *Forms of Prayer To Be Used at Sea* (pp. 628-636). It is found along with the Naval Prayer (p. 635).

I often think about this prayer for steadfastness as having a larger application. It seems to me to capture rather precisely the character and nature of the parochial ministry, no doubt at all times, but especially in these difficult times where the continuation of the parochial ministry is very much at stake in Canada as a whole and in the Diocese of Nova Scotia in particular.

The image of steadfastness, of holding firm to matters of principle in practical and prayerful ways, of sticking with the glories of the spiritual tradition of classical Anglicanism in the face of denial and abuse has a strong necessity. The image captures rather precisely what we have had to do together as parish and priest with respect to the things of Revelation that have been entrusted to us and with respect to the matters of property that are the visible expression of our spiritual witness in the land where it has pleased God to place us.

I look back, not only on this year, but on the number of years that we have been together as priest and people and what I see is a remarkable steadfastness in the face of great challenges and difficulties within and beyond the Parish. At issue spiritually, as I have said, consistently I think, is the matter of Trinitarian orthodoxy, the matter of holding fast to the essentials of the Christian faith as we have received them in the face of the betrayals of those principles through confusion and ignorance, whether willingly or unwillingly.

At issue practically is the welfare and well-being of the Parish, not as an end in itself, but as existing for a purpose and with a mission. That purpose and mission is centered on where we are, here in Windsor, but reaches out beyond ourselves - to the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in spite of its problems

and to the wider aspects of the Anglican Communion now in the throes of the disarray of impaired communion. There is a wider dimension, too, to our witness and mission – an ecumenical dimension through our continued commitment to the formularies and foundational documents that govern our life as a Christian Church within the larger community of the Church Catholic.

At the centre of our purpose and mission is the worship of the God who has revealed himself to us in the witness of the Scriptures creedally and doctrinally understood as the Blessed Trinity, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I cannot stress this point enough because, far from being an abstract idea, it is the formative principle of what it means to be the Church. The constant challenge of our age and for the Christian witness in our age is the task of recovering and/or discovering what it means to be the Church. Lose sight of the primacy of worship and we lose sight of all that undergirds the practical life of the church.

The demands of charity, after all, are rooted in the love of God who is Trinity. In a way, it is as simple as that – and as profound as that! The Catechism – much neglected and often derided – makes clear that the Church is Trinitarian in form and content.

Question. What is the Church?

Answer. The family of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

We are all individually members of that Trinitarian reality through our being baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and we are sustained in that divine life through the sacrament of Holy Communion which is nothing less than our participation in the great thanksgiving of the Son to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit; in short, our participation in the self-giving life of the Blessed Trinity. Therein is the glory.

These are, undeniably, theological comments and thoughts. But they are at the heart and core of our life together as a parish. They have to be. No Trinity. No Church, at whatever level. This is the God whom we worship and adore, the mystery “*that passeth understanding*”, that is to say, the mystery that is neither the product of our imaginations and finite reasonings nor the mystery that can be reduced to ourselves. It is always more; the mystery which is revealed is the mystery that cannot be exhausted, neither can it be emptied of its content. We cannot not think it. We can only continue to think our way into its deeper meaning and truth.

God is not a no-name reality. The idea of the re-imagining of God to take whatever form we envision betrays the very basic and biblical idea that we are made in the image of God, not God in our image. For Christians, as signaled in the baptismal

liturgy and in the Eucharist, that means that we are *in imago trinitatis*, in the image of the Trinity.

The great preacher/poet John Donne wonderfully observes the paradox that

*'twas much, that man was made like God before,
But that God should be made like man much more*

capturing wonderfully the mystery of the incarnation, the wonder of God being with us in the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ through whose incarnation we come (and in no other way) to the understanding of God as Trinity. God made man in Jesus Christ does not mean that God becomes whatever we want him to be. Such is the idolatry of our imaginations and desires, the very things that God in becoming incarnate seeks to redeem. He does so by drawing us into his own life.

It is Jesus who teaches us that God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. This is the basic and essential understanding of the Christian Faith and one which speaks to our lives individually and corporately, practically and pastorally. It is about honouring one another as the creatures whom God loves and it is about acting out of that love of God towards us. It is about participating in the infinite love of God sacramentally and practically in terms of our service and commitment.

It takes steadfastness, holding gently yet firmly to the things which belong to our life together. That is what I think we have been doing. It is, I think, in many ways, God's doing through us, and for that may God be praised. For it is all a kind of marvel. May God be praised for all of you!

This past year has simply been outstanding even in the face of very real and great challenges and difficulties. It was "*a challenge year*" for us in terms of commitment to the present and future of the Parish. As we have shown repeatedly and consistently, the business side of the Parish is about debt management. That is the reality of the Parish and we have undertaken to live and work with that honestly and with integrity. But the year 2004 required a greater effort - the attempt to see if we could improve on the income side of the ledger even as we have been trying to reduce expenses. The result is nothing short of a minor miracle. We have exceeded almost all budgeted income predictions, most significantly, the committed givings, but also in the categories of givings for Easter, the Summer, Thanksgiving and Christmas. *Laus Deo.*

It is good sometimes to stand back, take stock and appreciate where we are in order to consider just what is possible in realistic ways. Consider for a moment the following which I hope will help to put things in some sort of perspective.

Envelope Income:

1999 - \$ 54,420.00
2000 - \$ 60,825.00
2001 - \$ 60,945.00
2002 - \$ 59,687.00
2003 - \$ 59,706.00
2004 - \$ 66,324.00

These increases are remarkable. The increases from 2003 to 2004 reflect, in part, a response to the idea of 'the first of the month' pattern of contributions, and in part, the growing sense of the importance of the Parish's witness and mission. Above all, they signal a kind of steadfastness.

We saw substantial increases in the Advent/Christmas offerings from \$ 7, 863.00 in 2003 to \$ 10, 038.00 in 2004.

We saw modest increases in the Lent/Easter offerings from \$ 6, 143.00 in 2003 to \$ 6, 542.00 in 2004.

We saw modest increases in the Thanksgiving offerings from \$ 3, 340.00 in 2003 to \$ 3, 897.00 in 2004.

We saw substantial increases in the Summer offerings from \$ 2, 581.00 in 2003 to \$ 3, 585.00 in 2005.

These increases are significant indicators of the will and the determination on the part of the Parish to build for the future. I think they signify as well support for the particular financial strategies which we have been pursuing, namely, working within the limits of a realistic budget, using assets to underwrite the yearly operational overdraft without liquidating those assets and continuing to work at the building up of the designated assets of the Parish, in part through the Christ Church Foundation. Overall the assets of the Parish have also increased from approximately \$ 98,000 in 1998 to almost \$ 220,000 in 2004.

We have also been able to keep expenses under control, with some decreases, for instance, in the cost of fuel owing to the efficiency of the new furnaces. In 2003, the cost of fuel was \$ 16,646. In 2004, it was \$ 13,599. In 2005, we hope to see some further decreases in the fuel budget owing to the decision to hold services in the Hall during January, February and part of March. Initial indications are that we will see a difference.

We have a long ways to go to get the Parish on a more stable financial footing for the long-term but our commitment is precisely to the future of the Parish out of a commitment to its life and witness as an integral part of the diocese and the Anglican Communion. We have a mission here in the community of Windsor and the surrounding area.

The predicament that we have been in has required drastic measures on the part of the Parish in order to insure its survival. I don't need to rehearse any of that at this point. Suffice to say that the net worth of the Parish – assets versus debts – is about \$ 23,000 (see balance sheet). In other words, if everything was cashed out, that is where we would stand. The figure is almost equivalent to the yearly allotment desiderata of the Diocese; in other words, a figure we cannot hope to meet at this time, as we have explained and demonstrated time and time again, annual report after annual report. It is really a matter of the economies of scale. We have an overriding obligation to protect, maintain, and improve upon the real property of the Parish and in particular with respect to the assets entrusted to us. The wonderful advances of this year mean that we are slowly reducing the amount of the overdraft, the running deficit of the Parish inherited from years past.

As you know, Bishop Hiltz appointed me "*priest-in-charge*" of the neighbouring *Parish of Avon Valley* while they await the appointment of a new rector. My involvement there and at *King's-Edgehill School* is only possible through the support and good-will of the Parish of Christ Church. Such things belong to our mutual commitment to the teaching and pastoral ministry. They bear testimony to the *covenant-in-ministry* between me and the Parish of Christ Church and to our continuing task of growing into the ministry of Christ together more and more fully.

We have had an outstanding and busy year. The litany of activities is simply amazing. This is an active parish. The elements of growth cannot be captured solely in economic terms but in terms of commitment and all of the little things which taken together signal the vitality of the Parish. As always, however, it is about working within limits. I cannot possibly rehearse all the litany of events but I want to thank all of you for your commitment to Christ in his Church here at Christ Church.

I would be remiss if I did not thank those who hold various offices and positions of responsibility within the Parish. I want to thank Harold Adams and Eric Nott for their strong support and wise advice about the temporal governance and direction of the Parish as its Wardens.

There is not enough that I can say about the outstanding efforts of the Treasurer and Parish Administrator, Chris Young. Some of you can, perhaps, appreciate

both the complexity and the drudgery of financial and fiduciary management. Her role as comptroller means keeping an eagle eye on all expenses and her ability to ferret out good business deals is legendary - she is known as '*the oil lady*' for her part in engineering a good deal for not only our church but other churches in our communities! But her careful work for the Parish, though not always understood by everyone, should be appreciated and celebrated by all of you.

I want to thank all the members of the Parish Council for their leadership and willingness to take responsibility for the well-being of the Parish: to Alan Fraser, Alan Carmichael, Evelyn Holland, Robin and Trevor McKay, John Edgecombe, Scotty Cameron, Bev Morash, Eric Nott, Harold Adams, and Chris Young.

I want to thank Owen Stephens for his amazing work as organist and choir director. His labours and dedication are simply outstanding and greatly appreciated. I hope that all of you recognize the quality of his musical knowledge, learning and playing. I want to thank the choir for their steadfastness, willingness, camaraderie and for their dedication to the centrality of worship. I want to thank the sanctuary guild - for Aggie, Doreen, Muriel and Jacoba - for their stupendous efforts at keeping everything for the liturgy in such good order. I want to thank Bev for his faithfulness and assistance, along with Pam McKay-Edgecombe, as Layreaders. I want to thank Bev as well for his outstanding work as Sexton and general *man-about-the-Parish* ready to help out with all and anything, from toting organs to delivering shoe-boxes. Our gratitude extends as well to Evelyn Holland for her work at greeting people at the door and handing out the prayer books and hymn books.

I want to thank Pam McKay-Edgecombe and the teachers and helpers of the Sunday School - Teena Balding, Nova-Dawn Oulton, Mary-Ann Dufour, Maggie Lindsay-Sangster, Jeff Burgess, Lori-Anne Kelley, Micah Lee and all the parents and others who have helped out with the various programmes and events of the Sunday School. It has been great to have the children joining the congregation at communion time. A highlight of the year past for the Sunday School was the admission to communicant status in the spring of four young ladies who were subsequently confirmed by Bishop Hiltz in November. Congratulations to Erica McKay-Edgecombe, Kaylin Lawrence, Megan Mulloy and Ashley States. I also want to thank Kayla and Kate Walsh for serving so faithfully at the altar and to Morgan McKay-Edgecombe and Kyle Carroll for serving at Christmas.

I want to thank the Ladies of the *Kingston Guild* - to Vivian Riley, Helen Gibson, Rovine Frank, Eileen Demone, Eleanor Currie, Doreen Carter, Sally Swinamer, Dora Cochrane, Chris Young and others for their exceptionable ministry of hospitality especially at funerals in the Parish and for their various fund-raising efforts. The Kingston Guild this year has contributed over \$ 5,000.00 to the Parish. I want to thank them in particular for their catering work at two off-site

events at the request of Barbara Hughes. The monies raised went to the Christ Church Foundation and were used to pay for the building of the deck at the rectory, a project which has finally been completed. My thanks as well to Bev for his tools, to Brian Balding for his help and for the assistance of Derek Bowman and Kevin Lakes of King's-Edgehill School on this project.

I want to thank Jacoba Morash, Moira Burgess, Gail Hall, John and Emma Devenney and others who help out and organize so wonderfully the receptions at the concerts, both *the Newfoundland and Country Evenings of Musical Entertainment* and the various classical concerts, *Blue Engine String Quarter*, the *Jones-Mauri Guitar/Cello Duo* held at Christ Church this past year. These events have been a good form of outreach on the part of our parish.

I want to thank Deani Hines, Helen Gibson and Aggie Langille for their ministry of hospitality to the deaf. I am now chaplain to the deaf and lead their monthly service of worship with the help of interpreters. This, too, is an aspect of the Parish's ministry and outreach and one which is appreciated by the members of the deaf community.

As well I want to thank Aggie Langille for undertaking the task of hosting the Seniors' Drop-In on Thursdays, 1:30-3:30. I know how much this programme is much appreciated by those who attend.

I want to thank Lloyd Norman, Scotty Cameron, Jim Wilcox, Darrell Beaver, Brian Balding, Herb Phillips, Bert Galley, Eric Nott, Emerson Hall and all others involved in the work of the Men's Club, especially their labours at Thanksgiving and Christmas time in decorating the Church. We can expect that their services will soon be wanted for the TV show *'While you were out'* or for any number of other decorating and make-over shows! My thanks, too, for their labours along with so many others at the Pancake Supper. Thanks, too, to Bev, Llyod and Aggie with respect to the Christmas Stockings Programme for the Waterville Correction Centre.

I want to thank Gail Denman, Wanda and Mike Donnelle and Diana Oulton for their remarkable work at organizing and orchestrating the annual Ham Supper in November. This has, as always under their leadership, been an outstanding affair. Like all good things, however, there comes a time when it has to end. They have signaled to me that 2004 was their last year of undertaking that project. We all owe them a great debt of thanks for a job well-done. They have left a well organised list of what and how it is done. Any takers for next year?

The things mentioned above by no means exhaust the range of activities and events in the life of the Parish though they give some idea of the level and nature

of the activities of the Parish. I hope that I have not left anyone out who should be thanked!

For me and my family, the year past has been momentous. Elizabeth was off to her second year of studies at St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland while Joel headed off to Carleton in Ottawa. It was good to see them both at Christmas. Madeleine stays extremely busy in all her various activities and studies in her Grade 11 year. Marilyn and I struggle to keep on top of it all, somehow! Argus the greyhound enjoys life in the rectory as well. I have continued to be involved in a wide range of things, preaching at King's College Chapel, Halifax on occasion, conducting a priest's retreat in Prince Edward Island on the *Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, giving a quiet day for priests on 'What is Scripture?', presenting a paper on the Catechism at St. George's in Halifax, attending the Atlantic Theological Conference in Fredericton, participating as a member of a theological advisory group to some Canadian Bishops meeting in Toronto, attending the *Way Forward Conference* in Ottawa, writing a number of book reviews for the Diocesan Times as well as some other papers and sermons which have found their way into the wide, wide world of the internet. All in all it has been a busy, exacting and demanding year for me but one in which I have enjoyed the variety of the different things that I have had to do. They have helped me to cope with the more intractable and stressful things.

At the end of the day, what remains is the necessity of steadfastness, our *sticking-with-it-ness* in "run[ning] with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith". Therein lies the glory, "continuing in the same until it be thoroughly finished". Thank you for the privilege of being your priest.

Yours in Christ,

*Fr. David Curry
February 13th, 2005*