

The Rector's Annual Report for 2005

"Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

So the disciples ask Jesus in the midst of a sea-storm. *"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still."* But he also rebukes us, *"Why are ye so fearful?"* We forget, perhaps, the true nature of his care, *the care that has cure in it*, the care that signals the sacrifice of Christ and the pattern of his death and resurrection in us.

The year has passed on Angel's wings and there is much to be grateful to God. In the midst of a sea of troubles within and without the Anglican Communion, somehow our parish has managed to stay afloat. But only by looking to Jesus. Take our eyes off Jesus and we sink under the waves of worry and folly. We forget who we are and what we are called to be. We forget our witness and our mission which is always about more than us.

Two sorts of questions have constantly been before us; questions about stewardship and questions about mission. Quite often, these questions are separated and opposed when, in fact, they are closely and intimately related. Our questions about stewardship have to do with the proper maintenance of the practical resources of the parish but that is only for the sake of the parish's mission and witness to the spiritual treasures which have been entrusted to us – the things of the Christian Faith in the manner and way in which we have authoritatively received them in our Anglican tradition, principally, *The Book of Common Prayer, The Thirty-nine Articles, The Ordinal and The Solemn Declaration of 1893*; in short, the Common Prayer tradition. These are the things which connect the Canadian Church to the Church Universal by being *"in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world."* They are the principles, too, which govern the nature of my pastoral ministry among you as stated in *The Covenant of Ministry* between me and the parish.

Take your eyes off those things and there is confusion and disarray, controversy and persecution. The struggle is to recover the doctrinal mind of our Anglican identity that alone can shape our lives devotionally to the glory of God. Take your eyes off those things and we lose sight of Christ. For Anglicans, our life in Christ is necessarily *mediated* through the witness of the Scriptures conveyed through the Common Prayer tradition. Take your eyes off that and we lose sight of Christ because we betray the things that have been entrusted to us that keep us with Christ and that belong to our witness to Christ.

The greater storms are always the storms of the soul individually and collectively. We cannot be an integral part of *"the one, holy, catholic and apostolic*

church” without honouring the way in which the doctrines of the Faith have been communicated and mediated to us.

Quite simply, what is at issue for Anglicans is whether we will hold ourselves, our priests and bishops, dioceses and parishes; in short, our church in its institutional structures, accountable to the very principles which define our Anglican identity and which measure our words and our actions as faithful Christians. We have a wonderful and rich heritage which belongs to our witness to the Catholic Faith and which connects us in honest and holy ways to the life of the Church Universal. But we only honour that if we live and think out of it and not run away from it.

Quite simply, that is the challenge, especially in the face of the confusions and the forms of impairment in the Anglican Communion over the issue of same-sex marriage. The form of our Christian witness as Anglicans commits me and you to being “*in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world*”, as *The Solemn Declaration* puts it, “*as an integral portion of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.*” At issue, is our faithfulness to what I have called “*the Canterbury Connection*” in the face of statements made in Canada, for instance by the Primate, about “*walking apart*” from the Communion. I am committed by my vows to “*walking with*” the Communion and have an obligation to support all and any efforts to recover the doctrinal mind of the Communion that respect the *magisterium*, the teaching authority of the Church expressed authoritatively in *The Book of Common Prayer*, *The Thirty-nine Articles*, *The Ordinal* and *The Solemn Declaration of 1893* that define and measure our life and witness together. In Canada, that has meant being involved with and supporting *the Network* and *the Federation of the Anglican Essentials Movement* in their efforts to avoid the schismatical tendencies of the Canadian and American Churches and to provide a mechanism for Anglicans to continue to walk with the Communion, faithful to the witness of the Scriptures doctrinally and authoritatively received in the Churches of the Anglican Communion.

With respect to this issue, *The Windsor Report* and *The Dromantine Communiqué* make it very clear that there is a “*tear [in] the fabric of our communion at its deepest level*” over the unilateral actions in Canada and the States that compromise the orthodox teaching about marriage and morality. In Canada, *The St. Michael Report*, commissioned by the Primate for the House of Bishops, makes it abundantly clear that the issue of the blessing of same-sex relationships is a matter of doctrine; a matter, therefore, over which synods and bishops have no authority.

Unfortunately, *The Study Guide to The St. Michael Report* fudges the clarity about doctrine in the Report itself by attempting to suggest that doctrine – teaching – is about opinions arrived at among ourselves in discussion and consensus-building

rather than about the deepening of our understanding and commitment to what we have received through the witness of the Scriptures in the life of the Church. This is the same old game of revising the Faith to suit particular interests, being “conformed to the world”, as it were, rather than being “transformed by the renewing of [our] minds”.

The difficulty, as I have said to you many, many times, has been the inability to distinguish between the doctrine of Christian marriage, so clearly and beautifully expressed in the Marriage Service of *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the blessing of friendships, which, whatever they might mean, cannot be equivalent or analogous to marriage. Our *Parish Theological Statement* continues to provide a principled and pastoral way of dealing with these difficult issues and in a way that is clearly rooted in the teaching of the Church. The problem, too, has been about confusing matters that are pastoral with attempts to change the church’s doctrine through changes to the liturgy. But that has been a long standing problem and one which challenges the nature of the parish ministry as well.

It is the challenge for us together as priest and people within that doctrinal understanding of the ministry, expressly identified in *The Covenant of Ministry*, and with respect to the exigencies of the Parish. In 1998, the gravity of the financial situation of the Parish became apparent as has been patiently, painstakingly and frequently rehearsed and explained to you. What has been at issue in our relations with the Diocese is our corporate status which we have undertaken to protect in the face of the attempts to compromise the integrity of the Parish as a Corporation, legally and canonically constituted.

Our strategy as a Parish has been simple and clear: to build up the investments of the Parish and to hold operational costs to the barest minimum while continuing to carry on faithfully with the programmes of the Parish as a lively witness to the body of Christ in this community and beyond. My letter to the Parish in September, 2005, along with that of the Treasurer and Wardens, explained, once again, the immediate difficulties of our fiscal situation, exacerbated by wind damage and oil costs, the sea-storms, if you like, of contemporary economic life for a small corporation. We seem to have weathered those storms and once again, *Laus Deo*, we have come through the year remarkably well. Indeed, better than anticipated. But the same challenges remain.

Our strategy of sustainability, namely, keeping within a certain margin of overdraft while continuing to build up investments and maintaining structures, needs constant re-examination and review. It has been suggested to me that we need to look at a five-year plan to see where we might be, based on realistic expectations about expenditures and income, and to begin to make decisions and plans accordingly. I see this as a real priority for the new Parish Council and as a

necessity for our responsible stewardship of the temporal and material resources entrusted to us as a Parish.

The success of the **Ham Dinner** in the Fall, undertaken really as a co-operative activity of the Parish as a whole, though certainly not without the organizational leadership of *Pam McKay-Edgecombe*, was an important sign of the Parish's determination and willingness to commit to the future and to begin to accept a greater degree of ownership with respect to the Parish. This is and has been one of the primary challenges for our Parish. Thank you to all who participated and contributed. It was one of the outstanding events of the year.

Looking back on the year past is at once exhausting and exhilarating. I never cease to marvel at the minor miracle that is the life of a parish. My fear, quite often, is that many of you don't see it, but from my perspective there are so many grace-notes, so many signs of God's wonderful providence at work in people's lives and in the life of the Parish, that simply override the all-too-easy temptations to discouragement and despair. The life of a parish, like that of the soul, is slow-growth, provided one remains centered on Christ. That is the constant challenge. That slow-growth cannot always be measured simply in numerical terms. What I have been privileged to see is the deepening of devotion, of repentance, and of commitment by many of you; in short, the signs of a kind of maturing in the Faith. It requires perseverance and patience. It requires our being faithful to the patterns of spiritual life and witness which belong to the form of our Christian identity.

For we have been a very busy and active parish. For most of 2005, in part through your generosity and sense of mission, I was *priest-in-charge* of the Avon Valley parish with its four small churches. Out of the fourteen months of that experience has come a greater degree of unity and co-operation between our two parishes and *mirabile dictu*, a strong desire to continue to have monthly Combined Parishes' Evensong Services, even holding them at Hensley Memorial Chapel at King's-Edgehill School during the '*heating season*' for the prudential reasons of good stewardship, on the one hand, and for the spiritual reasons of recovering some of what belongs to the history of our Anglican witness in the Windsor Area, on the other hand. This will continue, *si Deus vult*, throughout 2006, a service already having been held in February and the next scheduled for March 19th and one following at St. Thomas' later in April.

We hosted the regional ACW meeting in the Fall of 2005 with a service and a meal presided over by our own "*Queen of Hospitality*", *Helen Gibson*. We have continued to host King's-Edgehill School for their annual Carol Service in the late Fall and the Church Parade in the early Spring. We have continued our involvement with *The Ministry of the Deaf* providing a monthly service and little luncheon following. My thanks to *Helen Gibson*, to *Deani Hines* and to *Aggie*

Langille for their labours. It is my hope to incorporate the deaf more fully into the worshipping life of the Parish. To that end, we have applied for some funds - \$1,600.00 - that would allow us to pay for interpreters at our regular 10:30 services at least once a month. This, too, is a sign of outreach and ministry.

We have as well hosted a number of successful musical concerts and events, such as the **Newfoundland and Country Nights** along with our annual **Variety Show**. My thanks to all who have been involved in those events, particularly to *Eric Nott* and to *Emma* and *John DeVenney*. Such things are important not just as minor fund-raisers but as signs of the outreach of the Parish to the wider community. My thanks especially to *Moira Burgess*, *Helen Gibson*, *Jacoba Morash*, *Gail Hall*, and many, many more for their contributions towards the hospitality at those events and which help to make them such outstanding affairs.

The Kingston Guild, as always, is to be thanked for their efforts and activities and for being so willing to step in and help out with each and every parish event and for their exquisite and much appreciated ministry of hospitality at the time of funerals in our Parish. **The Men's Club**, too, continue to meet once a month with the most outstanding breakfast in Windsor, a cholesterol high, but also have been strong in their support and work for the parish, ranging from their decorative expertise at Thanksgiving and Christmas to the Pancake Supper. My thanks to *Lloyd Norman*, *Scotty Cameron*, *Jim Wilcox*, *Daryl Beaver*, *Brian Balding*, *Herb Phillips*, *Burt Galley*, *Eric Nott*, and *Bev Morash*. They have also provided vigilance over the property at Halloween and have helped with security and safety at the School services here at Christ Church. My thanks, too, to *Emerson Hall* for providing the new Vestry Door steps, to *Brian Balding* for his invaluable assistance with a new Water-heater for the Hall in an emergency situation and for his help in many areas of property maintenance and repair.

The Sunday School has had a remarkable year under the new direction and leadership of *Teena Balding* and her wonderful cadre of teachers. Thank you so very much. **The Seniors' Drop-in** continues to provide a valuable and much appreciated opportunity for fellowship and fun on Thursday afternoons, in large part through the labours of *Aggie Langille* and *Muriel Fraser*. **The Sanctuary Guild** continues to do a superb job of keeping the appointments of the altar in proper condition for all services and is especially to be commended for their work at Christmas and Easter. Our thanks to *Jacoba Morash*, *Aggie Langille*, and *Muriel Fraser*. I also want to thank *Jacoba Morash* for her many and wonderful contributions to the gardens of the Parish.

As always, I am grateful for the support, commitment and service of *Bev Morash*, both as sexton for his labours around and about the property of the Parish and as Lay-reader, along with *Pam McKay-Edgecombe*. This year, too, we have been blessed with *Kate* and *Kayla Walsh* as servers on occasion and with

Heechul Jun and *Eric Ng* from King's-Edgehill School. Our thanks to *Evelyn Holland* for her labour of love and service as a greeter. I have been grateful, too, for the services of *the Rev'd Keith Todd*, who has graciously stepped in a number of times and who has been a welcome support and friend to me and the parish in these challenging times. My thanks as well to *Rev'd Leslie Ball* who has assisted at Christmas and Easter with the administration of the Sacrament.

The Choir, along with our **Organist** *Owen Stephens*, continue to provide outstanding service and leadership for our services of worship. We are greatly blessed to have someone of Owen's ability and commitment and the choir's willingness and sacrifice of time and energy is quite wonderful. Worship is at the center of our life together as the body of Christ. Without that "*all our doings are nothing worth*", for we would be looking not at Christ but at ourselves. We would be subject to the wrongful demands to entertain and amuse rather than to worship and adore. There can be no parish life or mission that is not rooted in worship. This is the central purpose of being together. Everything flows out of our faithful and orthodox worship of God, the holy and blessed Trinity. Without that we are nothing and nothing worth.

That has been a kind of theme-song for me this past year both within and without the parish, in speaking and preaching engagements in Halifax at the University of King's College, at Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto (at the Open Door Conference of Anglican Essentials), and in Charlottetown at the Cathedral Institute. I have been and continue to be involved as a theologian writing and publishing a fair number of papers and articles with regard to the presenting issues and controversies in our Church over human sexuality. I continue as well as Chaplain and teacher at King's-Edgehill School, which has been an important part of the witness and mission of the Parish in recovering those significant connections to the School which is a large part of the Parish's history and legacy.

Marilyn and I are grateful to the Parish for your support and interest in our family. With **Madeleine's** graduation in the Spring, we anticipate that all three children will be at University next year, leaving us with Argus, our greyhound. **Elizabeth**, currently is in her third year of the four year "*Great Books*" interdisciplinary course of studies in classics, philosophy, science and literature (double major, double minor) at St. John's Annapolis, Maryland. **Joel** is in his second year at Carleton, Ottawa, in the Humanities Programme and has just heard that he has been accepted for a study year at Lancaster University in England starting in September. Marilyn continues to work at the Public Library in Wolfville and to take an active role in the Choir and in the gardens of the Parish. I am most grateful for her support and commitment to our ministry among you and in the wider Church.

The Parish Council is much to be thanked for their service and labours without which we cannot be a parish. We have been ever so fortunate with the commitment of the executive – *Eric Nott, Harold Adams, and Chris Young* – for the kind of leadership and oversight on temporal matters that they have provided the Parish Council and the Parish. I want to signal my thanks and that of the Parish to both *Chris Young* and to *Harold Adams* who are stepping down from the Council.

Their dedication and devotion to the well-being of the Parish in these difficult times is much appreciated. *Chris'* labours in the office of Treasurer have been simply invaluable with respect to putting our financial house in good order while *Harold's* legal experience have provided the Parish with a necessary *gravitas* in the midst of the sea-storms of controversy, especially in our dealings with the Diocese. My heartfelt thanks to them both and for their continued interest in the Parish. They have assured the Parish Council that they will still be available for advice and help.

We are, I think, greatly blessed that *Rod Kershaw*, a former bank manager at RBC, has agreed to take over the treasury portfolio of our Parish. Since December 31st, he has been the treasurer *pro tempore*, awaiting the will of the Annual Meeting to become the Parish Treasurer officially. I am also grateful to *Barbara Hughes*, herself a lawyer, for her signaling her willingness to serve on Parish Council, along with a number of others.

Annual Meetings are always about the challenge of carrying on faithfully and sensibly and that is quite often reflected in the nomination and election of officers and members of Parish Council. I am only too well aware of the difficulties for peoples because of work and family and other commitments but I can only stress how much “*this is a time for you to bear testimony*” to the things of Christ in every aspect of the corporate life of our parish.

In the Fall of 2005, I was humbled and moved by your kindnesses in presenting to me a gift, given “*on behalf of the Parish of Christ Church*” by representatives of all the various organizations of the Parish as well as various individuals, and extravagantly dedicated “*as a token in appreciation of [my] leadership and tireless efforts on behalf of the Parish of Christ Church*”. The extravagance of the dedication was only complemented by the extravagance of the gift itself: Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's illustrated three-volume set of *The Cathedrals of England*, (compiled by Priscilla Metcalf with contributions from others). An outstanding student of art and architecture, Pevsner's love and interest in the English cathedrals and churches served to place them in a wider appreciation of the artistic richness and splendour of the Christian medieval culture which has shaped so much of our own. I continue to be deeply touched by this thoughtful, kind and unexpected

gesture and can only say '*thank you*' not simply for this special gift but for the greater privilege of being your priest and pastor and teacher.

The gift itself signals, it seems to me, one of the themes of our life together, namely, the necessity of recovering and honouring the things that belong to our spiritual legacy as Anglican Christians. Christ Church stands in that gothic tradition, albeit through the sea-change of the centuries, and serves as a reminder to us of the care of Christ, the care which challenges us. Both the building itself and our selves as a Parish are to be a sign of the care of Christ, come what may in the sea-storms of life. The question is not about whether Christ cares for us; it is rather about whether we care.

Humbly submitted,

*Fr. David Curry
Christ Church
Windsor, NS
February 19th, 2006*