

## *Rector's Annual Report - 2006*

*“O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness,/and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men.”*

First a book, now a movie, *The Children of Men* offers a thoughtful and disturbing challenge to the assumptions of contemporary culture. The novel, of course, explores the problems and issues belonging to the spiritual barrenness of our world and day much more thoughtfully and more completely than is possible with the movie. Imagine a world where there are no children because the human race has become infertile but doesn't know why. It is the culture of the living dead, the palliative care culture from the youngest to the oldest for everyone is on the death watch, we might say. The world is dying and doesn't know why.

P.D. James' novel is outstanding. I have written various book-reviews of this novel, most recently one published in the Diocesan Times, but I want to highlight the significance of the title, *The Children of Men*, because it goes a long ways towards signaling what is the problem and, perhaps, the antidote to the dis-ease of our contemporary culture and in ways that are profoundly simple and eloquent. *“O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness,/and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men”*, the psalmist says in Psalm 107 (vs. 15).

That is what is missing. Our commitment to praise and worship, not the praise and worship to a *'who/where/or whatever'* arising out of the vain imaginations and *“the devices and desires of our own hearts”*, but our thinking and loving commitment to the praise and worship of God who has revealed himself to us as the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and whose praise embraces *“the wonders that he doeth for the children of men”*, the wonders of creation, redemption and sanctification, the wonders of our life together in prayer and praise, in service and sacrifice. For if we do not live *for* God, and this is the strong point of the novel, I think, then there is no reason to live *for* and *with* one another. More than cosmic orphans, we are orphans without a cosmos, without a world. We are *“the hollow men”*, the *“empty men”*, to use another image from another poet, T.S. Eliot.

The novel, and to a far lesser extent, the movie, opens us out to the minor miracle of birth in the midst of death, the minor miracle which is really part of the greater miracle of life itself, life that is essentially the life of God wondrously revealed to us as the life in which we might *“live and move and have our being.”* Only if. Only if we will *“praise the Lord for his goodness and declare his wonders that he doeth for the children of men.”* Forget that and we have no reason to exist. All our modern anxieties and all our attempts at practical solutions are vanity and folly if they ignore the praise and worship of God.

That attention to the praise and worship of God is part and parcel of our Parish life and mission. It means the love of God with the whole of our being, especially our minds, dare I say, in a Church and culture which has despaired of revelation and theology and which treats God and Church primarily in sociological and political terms, often disparagingly and dismissively. This is part and parcel of the spiritual barrenness of our age, our culture and our Church addressed so eloquently in P.D. James' novel and, perhaps, alluded to in the disturbing violence of the movie.

The year past has been remarkable for the ways in which the Parish has acted prudently and prayerfully. The year past, too, has been remarkable for the ways in which God's grace is at work in the task of the renewal and recovery of the Anglican mind. I can only hope and pray that Anglicans in Canada and elsewhere will recover the strength of conviction and a reasonable confidence in what belongs to the form of our Christian witness as an integral part of "*the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.*" For make no mistake, that is the challenge. Cultures and institutions are only as strong as their commitment to the spiritual principles which inform them. Neglect those things, the very things that I have been consistently at pains to teach and celebrate, and there is nothing worth preserving, nothing worth passing on; in short, no mission and no life.

In other words, the problems at the parochial, diocesan, national and international level are not primarily practical ones; *they are profoundly spiritual.* They have altogether to do with the commitment to *the intelligent praise and worship of God* and to the living out of that commitment in our corporate life together. If you think that the mission of the Parish is about preserving property, forget it. It is not worth it. The buildings and the property are only there for a spiritual purpose, *for* worship and not *to* be worshipped. They can be, and this is an important point and not merely a concession to our local limitations, *the means* by which we recover a more vital and vibrant form of orthodox Christian witness.

For that, too, is very much what is at stake in the face of the forms of sub-Christianity which threaten the contemporary Churches in our own denomination and in those around us. The forms of sub-Christianity are there in liturgies that lack doctrinal coherence and substance; liturgies that effectively deny the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith; liturgies that are married to the spiritual barrenness of our contemporary world in its post-Christian expressions. Is what is said and sung integrated with and faithful to the creeds of the Christian Faith? That is all you need to consider. The answer, painfully and sadly, is increasingly no. The further danger is that the failure to attend to the primary doctrines of the Christian Faith distorts the Church's witness, so much so that there is no witness *to* the world, only a vain parody of its barren preoccupations.

This, in turn, leaves Church and culture, especially in the western democracies which have their constitutional origins in the spiritual truths of Western Christianity and are unthinkable apart from that history, completely vulnerable to the menace of a militant Islam caught in the grip of a totalitarian ideology that utterly despises the western and Christian world precisely because of our weakness and lack of spiritual conviction. If we cannot commit to thinking the Christian Faith, belief itself is meaningless and dead. Lively faith is about a deep intellectual commitment that, in turn, carries over into service and sacrifice. It also provides a principled basis for respectful dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims and equally, with the practical atheists of contemporary culture.

Charity requires, no doubt, that one put up with, at least to a certain extent, the various forms of sub-Christianity that proliferate, for instance, in ecumenical liturgies and events and even in the kinds of demands that are put upon us as a Parish from time to time. That is an aspect of our being *in* the world but not *of* it. But it also means being honest about the limitations of such things and, where appropriate or possible, challenging them and seeking to bring things to a fuller and more complete expression. For charity without truth is simply not charity. It cannot mean compromising the integrity of our spiritual witness on matters of fundamental faith.

P.D. James observes acutely how the ecclesiastical scene mirrors the condition of political and social life, noting in the novel that *"during the mid-1990s the recognized churches, particularly the Church of England, moved from the theology of sin and redemption to a less uncompromising doctrine: corporate social responsibility coupled with a sentimental humanism"*, and, even more, recognizing that the next step is the virtual abolition of *"the Second Person of the Trinity together with His cross."* It is exactly where we are in the vain follies of re-imagining God, the family and the Church.

The novel recognizes the necessity of reform but it will be something more than simply political re-organization. It will be rebirth and renewal, the recovery of the theology of sin and redemption, precisely in the face of the barbarism of *"corporate social responsibility"* and the cruelty of *"sentimental humanism."* The cross is comfort and life precisely in the face of death.

It is, literally, the last word in the novel, invoked in the miracle of the grace of baptism after the miracle birth of a child. *"O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness,/and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men."*

## *The Parish in 2006*

A Year in the life of a Parish? It is almost impossible to capture all the activities and events of the year. It has been an exceptional year but one which is rooted and grounded in the spiritual realities of death and resurrection, the pattern of our life in Christ. The year past has been a year of miracles.

Numbers are but a measure of reality; they are not reality itself. They are part of the story but not the story itself. We have had a remarkable year for which there is much to be thankful to God for his many blessings and for the signs of grace at work in the life of the **Parish**, for what we might call the minor miracles.

The first minor miracle is indicated in the numbers, financially speaking. We have, for the first time, in decades upon decades, actually met our operational budget and achieved a modest profit. This is simply outstanding because it signals an end to the *haemorrhaging* of the Parish with respect to its assets and because it signals a real determination to continue with our mission and life as a vibrant and orthodox part of the Anglican Communion here in the community of Windsor. It also provides a basis upon which to build responsibly for the future.

There is the second minor miracle of the **Christ Church Foundation** which provides a measure of sense and foresight for the continuation of the Parish in the face of follies and confusions of the diocesan and national church which continue to threaten the parochial ministry. Through the Foundation and in the development of our five-year plan, the clear intention of our Parish to work towards contributing to the work of the wider church is signaled once again, as it has been, time and time and time again, in every annual report by me.

**The five-year plan** serves as our directional guide about what we would like to be able to accomplish and achieve. It is a further re-statement of the Parish's firm and unequivocal position in relation to the troubling issue of allotment, an issue which has been recognized by the stewardship programme of the National Church, "*Letting Down The Nets*", as one of three areas of the disfunctionality of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island that needs to be addressed before any stewardship programme can be responsibly undertaken. The other two areas are communication and organization. It is hoped that our initiatives and stance can provide a model of reason and sense and a means of encouragement for other parishes and for the diocese.

The work of our Treasurer, **Rod Kershaw**, together with the leadership and guidance of our Wardens, **Barbara Hughes** and **Eric Nott** and our financial advisor, **Trevor Hughes**, has been simply outstanding, both with respect to the Foundation and the Parish. Overall, the Parish has come to a deeper appreciation of its practical and financial realities this year and has rallied through the direction and leadership which these individuals and **Parish Council** have provided. That there is much more to do goes without saying, but much has been

accomplished that bodes well for the future of the Parish. Your response as members of the Parish to the initiatives of the past year is most encouraging.

I want to thank all the members of the **Parish Council** for their labours, ideas and commitment - to **Pam McKay-Edgecombe & John Edgecombe, Allan Fraser, Alan Carmichael, Scotty Cameron, Ken & Beth McBrine** (parish secretary), **Bev Morash** and **Evelyn Holland**, along with our Wardens and Treasurer. Evelyn Holland has stepped down from Parish Council this Fall. We thank her for her work among us on the Council and also for being a greeter, handing out books and bulletins on Sundays. The work of the Parish Council is essential for the continuation of **the Corporation of the Parish** and I thank them for their support and guidance in this year past. Special mention, too, goes to **June Kershaw** for her quiet labours, encouragement and suggestions!

One of the outstanding new events of the year was the **Lobster Supper** initiated by **Rod Kershaw** and undertaken with the help of everyone. It was a wonderful event in terms of camaraderie and financial benefit which, along with the increased revenues of **every** event of the Parish in the past year, contributed greatly to our overall fiscal success. Will we do it again? You betcha! The tentative date is May 5<sup>th</sup>. **The Parish Ham Supper** in November was also an outstanding event and well supported, for which we can be thankful for the leadership and labours of **Pam McKay-Edgecombe, Gail Denman** and many others, including, as at the Lobster Supper, **a phalanx of students** from **King's-Edgehill School** who assisted with the serving. All these particular events signal a real interest in the wider community for the continuation of the Parish.

**The Men's Club** has continued with its labours, contributing so marvellously to the decorating of the church at the high festivals of Thanksgiving and Christmas, leading the charge with the **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper**, assisting with the **Ham Supper**, sponsoring a successful spring **Yard Sale**, and helping out in so many ways with the property of the Parish. The Men's Club laments the loss of **Lloyd Norman** whose unexpected death has saddened us all.

On the property side, we are most grateful for the labours of our sexton, **Bev Morash** and for the help that **Emerson Hall** and **Brian Balding** provide whenever needed. I want to thank Bev and Brian for assisting me in what I hope and pray is the last shingling job (I probably shouldn't say that!) with respect to the roofs of the Parish, the re-shingling of the roof over the study of the Rectory. This year saw as well repairs to the steeple of the Church and the insulation of the Hall ceiling which was completed in January of this year, yet another prudential step in the work of good stewardship of the resources entrusted to us.

**The Kingston Guild** continues to provide an outstanding witness in the form of their hospitality ministry especially at the times of death. Their fund-raising endeavours are greatly appreciated. Please remember that they are collecting Sobey's tapes.

**The Newfoundland and Country Evenings of Musical Entertainment**, organized by **Emma** and **John Devenney**, has continued to be very successful and provides a welcome form of social outreach to the wider community. I also want to thank Emma and John for their leadership of the **Seniors' Drop-in** on Thursday afternoons. Of course, the kitchen labours of **Aggie Langille, Helen Gibson, Deanni Hines, Murial Fraser, Moira Burgess, Jacoba Morash, Evelyn Holland, Gail Hall**, and many others are greatly appreciated. They help make the Evenings of Entertainment and the afternoon Drop-in most pleasurable.

**The Annual Parish Variety and Talent Show** under the initiative and leadership of **Eric Nott** continues to be a most welcome and entertaining event, providing yet another venue for local talent and entertainment.

**The Sunday School**, under the leadership of **Teena Balding** and her troupe of lively and busy ladies - **Nova-Dawn Oulton, Lorry-Anne Kelley, Joan Carmichael, Stacy Burgess, Maggie Lindsay-Sangster** - has had a very busy, good and lively year. The various programmes involving young families and young children are well-supported and bode well for the future of the Parish. Often under-noticed, the services during the winter months in the Hall have helped to bring the Sunday School more fully into the ambience of the worshipping life of the Parish to the benefit of all, I think. I also want to mention **the Children's Crèche service** on Christmas Eve which seems to attract a growing number of younger families.

Another important initiative of this year past was the provision of an **Interpreter for the Deaf** at a morning service once a month, in addition to the **Atlantic Ministry of the Deaf** service one afternoon a month. This initiative was aided by funds from the Growth to Ministry Fund of the Diocese and I hope that we will be able to continue with this programme as part of our Parish outreach and mission. Certainly, it has had an impact on the Parish as a whole, opening people's eyes, if not their ears, to an important form of Christian witness and ministry, namely, incorporating members of the deaf community more fully and sacramentally into the life of the Christian Church. My hope and prayer is that this will continue to grow and be supported by the Parish. I want to thank, in particular, our interpreters for the deaf, **Mary Cunningham** and **Nicole Veinotte**, for their compassion, commitment and support for this initiative. I also want to thank **Robert Tupper** of AMD and **Clyde & Diana Hood** for their support and encouragement for this ministry among the deaf community. Once again, the hospitality labours of **Aggie Langille, Helen Gibson, Deanni Hines** and **Muriel Fraser** for the time of fellowship following these services interpreted for the deaf is greatly appreciated.

We continue to be greatly blessed with the outstanding services and talents of **Owen Stephens** as our organist and choir director. The preludes and postludes along with so much else that he provides constitute a very important ministry of music which complements and enhances the quality of our liturgical life. The

year past saw some important work that was done to one part of the organ which has contributed to the reliability of some of the stops on the organ. There is much more to be done with respect to **the restoration of the organ** and this is something which I hope that we will begin to address in the year ahead.

**The Choir** continues faithfully and with boundless good humour to add to the quality of our worshipping life and I want to thank them for their commitment and support. I also want to thank our faithful corps of servers - **Heechul Jun, Eric Ng** and **Tom Cho** from King's-Edgehill School and to **Cory Lunn** who visits from Truro on occasion. At Christmas, it was wonderful to have **Anthony Sangster** and **Diego Ramirez** and **Julie** and **Jack Morash** serve at the Christmas Eve Service. Of course, I want to thank **Bev Morash** for his constant and faithful labours as Parish Lay-reader. It is greatly appreciated. I also want to thank **Pam McKay-Edgecombe** for the occasions in which she assisted as well.

**The Sanctuary Guild**, under the direction and labours of **Aggie Langille** and assisted by **Muriel Fraser, Jacoba** and **Bev Morash**, continues to do an outstanding job in preparing the altar and sanctuary for services. It is a labour of love and sacrifice and I want to signal how greatly it is appreciated. As with the Choir, the Kingston Guild, the Sunday School and the Men's Club, new members are always welcome and needed. **Jacob Morash** is to be thanked for her imaginative and wonderful work, along with **Marilyn Curry**, with respect to the gardens of the Parish.

The ministry of the Parish extends beyond itself in other ways too, of course, such as in the monthly services at **Dykeland Lodge** and **Windsor Elms**, the weekly services at **Haliburton Place** in the West Hants Community Hospital, and the services of Evening Prayer at **Hensley Memorial Chapel, King's-Edgehill School**. In addition, I have endeavoured to provide a monthly service at **The Gladys Manning Home** as well. The growing number of parishioners now residing at **Kingsway Gardens** may well necessitate a monthly communion service there in 2007. We continue, of course, to run a little food-bank out of the Parish Hall for those in our community in need.

About the year past as a **Parish**, we may exclaim with the psalmist: "*O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness,/and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men.*"

## *A Priest's Life in 2006*

The year past has been an exceptionally busy year for me personally as a priest, a teacher and a theologian: addresses on *Some Literary Figures of Windsor's Past* to the **West Hants Historical Society** and the **Wolfville Historical Society**; papers, addresses and sermons at **Regent College**, University of British Columbia and **St. John's Parish, Shaughnessy** in Vancouver; a public lecture at **The University of King's College** on *The Da Vinci Code; Semper Reformans*, a response to a paper at **The Atlantic Theological Conference** in Charlottetown; a series of addresses on Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* at an SSC Priests' Retreat in Rogersville, New Brunswick, instructor at **The St. Michael's Conference** in Buctouche, NB; a sermon at **The University of King's College**; and various articles, letters and meditations for publication in *The Anglican Free Press*, *The Diocesan Times*, *The National Post*, *Prayer Book Society Publications*, and *Essentials Canada*. Such things belong to the vocation of a teaching priest, a vocation which I am privileged to exercise here in this **Parish** and in its association with **King's-Edgehill School**.

For **Marilyn** and me, it has been a remarkable year for our family as well. Our youngest daughter, **Madeleine**, graduated from **King's-Edgehill School** in June with her *International Baccalaureate Diploma* and entered **The University of Ottawa** in September. Our son, **Joel**, finished his second year at **Carleton University** and, after working at a multitude of jobs, has jetted off to **Lancaster University**, Lancaster, England, for his third year of university (and some traveling!). He is having the time of his life, I think. Our eldest, **Elizabeth**, finished her third year of studies at **St. John's College**, Annapolis, Maryland, and spent the summer working in Montreal before returning to St. John's for her fourth year. She has just learned that she has been accepted to read Classics at **Cambridge University**, Cambridge, England.

**Marilyn** has been busy working at the Wolfville Public Library as well as continuing with tutoring in reading and taking an on-line distance education course for her *Library Information & Technology Certificate* through Kingstec. She has recently left the Wolfville library and 'come home', as it were, to Windsor, taking up a job at the King's-Edgehill School library.

The year **2006** marked *the twenty-fifth anniversary* of my being made a **deacon**. I was greatly moved by the kindness and thoughtfulness of the Parish in presenting to me at the Christmas Eve service a lovely gift, a folio edition of *The Book of Common Prayer, ornamented with wood cuts from designs of Albert Durer, Hans Holbein, and others, in imitation of Queen Elizabeth's Book of Christian Prayers*. It was given "as a token in recognition of [my] anniversary." I can only say thank God and thank you for the privilege of being your parish priest. "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness,/and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men."

*Fr. David Curry*