

Rector's Annual Report - 2007

“For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting;/and his truth endureth from generation to generation”

It has been another remarkable year of noteworthy accomplishments by the Parish of Christ Church in the face of difficult and trying circumstances both within and beyond the Parish. I am most grateful to all of you for the measured and mature way in which we have persevered, not only surviving but thriving. For the second year in a row, we have managed to show a modest profit while maintaining the mission of our Parish in the town of Windsor and contributing in various ways to the life of the wider church.

The highlight of the year was, of course, the 125th Anniversary Celebration of the present building of Christ Church. The service and open-house on October 14th were well-received as was the little book published for the occasion. I am most grateful to all and it really was *all of you* who participated in this outstanding event in the life of our Parish. It was an event that signaled our commitment to ministry and mission here in Windsor and the role and place that the Parish continues to play in relation to King's-Edgehill School and with respect to the history of the Diocese. Our heartfelt thanks must go to our generous sponsors without which '*Gates of Heaven*' would not have been published. While it is dangerous to single out particular individuals, I am sure that you will join me in thanking especially Barbara Hughes, Beth McBrine, Rod and June Kershaw, Bev Morash, Eric Nott and Pam McKay-Edgecombe for their yeoman service in planning and executing the very successful sequence of events surrounding the entire celebration.

I wish that there was good news to report with respect to the state of affairs in the wider Anglican Communion but there is not. The North American Churches continue to insist on their way in the face of the pleas of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the Anglican Communion to honour the Windsor Report and to desist in the ordination of practicing 'homosexuals' and the blessing of same-sex unions. The Archbishop of Canterbury has outlined the situation very clearly in his 2007 Advent Letter with respect to the matter of biblical interpretation on this controversial issue.

But the deeper question is about what we believe we are free to do, if we seek to be recognisably faithful to Scripture and the moral tradition of the wider Church, with respect to blessing and sanctioning *in the name of the Church* certain personal decisions about what constitutes an acceptable Christian lifestyle. Insofar as there is currently any consensus in the Communion about this, it is not in favour of change in our discipline or our interpretation of the Bible.

This is why the episcopal ordination of a person in a same-sex union or a claim to the freedom to make liturgical declarations about the character of same-sex unions inevitably raises the question of whether a local church is still fully recognisable within the one family of practice and reflection. Where one part of

the family makes a decisive move that plainly implies a new understanding of Scripture that has not been received and agreed by the wider Church, it is not surprising that others find a problem in knowing how far they are still speaking the same language.

He has been equally clear that:

Where such a situation arises, it becomes important to clarify that the Communion as a whole is not committed to receiving the new interpretation and that there must be ways in which others can appropriately distance themselves from decisions and policies which they have not agreed. This is important in our relations with our own local contexts and equally in our ecumenical (and interfaith) encounters, to avoid confusion and deep misunderstanding.

In Canada, the General Synod of 2007 passed a motion *forbidding* individual dioceses from going ahead with the blessing of same-sex unions. Since then, two things have happened. First, three dioceses have voted to go ahead with such blessings - the Dioceses of Montreal, Ottawa and Niagara. *Nothing has been said by the Primate about such actions.* Secondly, two retired bishops, Bishops Harvey and Harding, have allied themselves with the Province of the Southern Cone under Primate Venables to provide spiritual leadership for those in Canada disaffected by the direction and actions of the Anglican Church of Canada. *This has sparked a rebuke by the Primate, The Most Rev'd Fred Hiltz, formerly bishop of this Diocese, and occasioned what appears to be further coercive actions by some dioceses, such as Central Newfoundland and Toronto, which have or are requiring clergy to have their licenses to function renewed.*

The Archbishop of Canterbury is as clear on the matter of polity as on the matter of morality. He can no more condone the jurisdictional incursions of bishops than he can admit that there is a new understanding of Scripture that all must willy-nilly accept.

I have consistently argued that the theological position of the Parish of Christ Church is a proper and legitimate way to deal with the moral and pastoral questions surrounding human sexuality. I have also consistently argued that I am committed to the formal and foundational documents of our Anglican polity, particularly, *The Book of Common Prayer, The Ordinal, and The Thirty-Nine Articles*, and to the form in which those teachings are understood in Canada to connect Anglicans to the Universal Church as stipulated in *The Solemn Declaration of 1893*. That Declaration commits us to what I have sometimes called *the Canterbury Connection*. That is what I have signed up for, as it were, and I have no intention and cannot be required to sign anything else. The threat of having one's license to preach and to celebrate be removed is just that – a threat. Whether our diocese will go the way of Central Newfoundland and Toronto with respect to the renewal of licenses and the way of Montreal, Ottawa and Niagara with respect to allowing same-sex blessings remains to be seen. It could get all rather messy and nasty. There are few things for which I have greater contempt than attempts at bullying.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has no legal or canonical jurisdiction in the affairs of the national and local churches of the Anglican Communion, but it is his role to state the mind of the Communion. He has done so. It may be necessary to find, as he has indicated, "*ways in which*

others can appropriately distance themselves from decisions and policies which they have not agreed.” There is no point in tiptoeing around this. I have long been pondering the idea of a Canterbury passport in the face of schismatical actions by the local and national synodical church!

Our classical polity commits us to a clear body of teaching on matters of fundamental doctrine, on matters of morality, and on matters of polity. There is a hierarchy of principles at work in these things. Some things are more important than others, which is not to say that some things aren't important. I have longed ago reconciled myself, as I think I must, to the idea of living within a fallible church where “*councils may... and have erred*”, as the Articles put it (Art. XXI). What we now face at the local and national level in Canada are attempts to coerce in matters of polity and to compromise catholicity by decisions on the part of local synods that openly contradict the consensus of the Communion in matters of moral doctrine, not to mention the *consensus fidelium* of the wider Church. There is the further irony that the claims for the autonomy of the National Churches have unleashed the claims for local autonomy on the part of individual diocesan synods, notwithstanding the constitutions of Synods which clearly state that matters of doctrine and worship do not lie within their purview.

The most positive thing that is happening as a result of all this confusion about human sexuality is the recognition of the need to establish *an Anglican Covenant* with mechanisms to hold each member church accountable to the Communion. This immense and important task is underway as promoted and encouraged by the Archbishop of Canterbury. I append my thoughts about the Draft Covenant that has already been developed along with the Theological Statement of the Parish.

I wish, too, that there was good news to report on the matter of our relations as a Parish to the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Despite some initially favourable signals and the hopes of being able to contribute to the Diocesan Synod financially without compromise to our very existence, the olive branch proffered in our five-year plan was rejected by Bishop Hiltz, then Diocesan. Everything remains, as it were, at a stand-off. Moreover, the Task Force on Allotment has made its recommendations and while *the ideal* of a 15% allotment may sound good, it is still far too much for many parishes given the scope of the Synod's programmes and operations which continue to expand even as revenues decrease. The recommendations also fail to deal with the outstanding conflict between stipend and allotment and fail to acknowledge the corporate integrity of the Parishes. In other words, very little has changed. It is, I fear, simply a war of attrition.

Our 125th Anniversary Celebration, however, has been good news in immeasurable ways. It has brought about a renewal of affection and a measure of commitment that I hope will enable us to persevere in the difficult days, months and years ahead. Apart from that, one of the most encouraging things to my mind is the growing number of intellectual writings about the necessity and importance of religion in the cultures and countries of the world. Something which we may not yet be able to think, owing to the particular form of secularity that infects Canada, it is nonetheless there internationally as witnessed by the growing number of books and writings by atheists and believers alike, such as Jürgen Habermas, Pope Benedict, Charles Taylor, Jonathan Sacks, Marcel Gauchet, Philip Jenkins, Neil Postman, Umberto Eco, Philip Nemo, George

Weigel, Peter Berger, and Howard Gardner, to name but a few. Against the snarl and whine of a personal and privatized religion, and against the arrogance of liberal secular culture, a more reflective and committed form of Christian Faith is beginning to emerge and develop. What place Anglicanism will have in this remains to be seen but it is far too early to disparage or dismiss the riches of our form of Christian belief. We may be at the beginnings of a much more concerted effort to rediscover and reclaim what belongs to our spiritual heritage in its truth and integrity apart from its merely social and political accoutrements, let alone the paralyzing weight of the synodical apparatus that so besets us.

About my own activities in this year past, I will simply say that “*what I have written, I have written.*” I will spare you the litany (actually, I am not sure that I can remember it all). Suffice to say that I have been busy teaching and preaching, preaching and teaching. On the family front, too, things have been busy and momentous: Elizabeth graduated from St. John’s, Annapolis, Maryland, in May ‘07 and is now reading classics at Cambridge University, England, in pursuit of a second degree; Joel enjoyed his year abroad at the University of Lancaster in England, and everywhere else, and is now back in Ottawa working and completing his Humanities degree at Carleton; Madeleine completed her first year at the University of Ottawa studying Latin and English. Marilyn is assistant librarian at King’s-Edgehill and is also teaching. Argus keeps house.

Much thanks is owed to so many of you: to the members of the Parish Council, especially to our wardens, *Eric Nott* and *Barbara Hughes*, for their outstanding leadership in a year of *sturm und drang*; to our Treasurer, *Rod Kershaw* and *June*, for their works of supererogation over the year past in so many different ways, from lobsters to signage; to *Ken & Beth McBrine*, especially for Beth’s splendid work in keeping the minutes (and for producing the picture posters for the 125th!); to all who appeared in costume at the 125th and acted as guides; to *Trevor Hughes* for his wisdom and advice especially with respect to the Christ Church Foundation; to *Scotty Cameron* and the Men’s Club for their hard work; to *Aggie Langille*, *Jacoba Morash*, *Muriel Fraser* and *Elizabeth Spurr* for their superlative labours in the Sanctuary Guild; to *Aggie Langille*, *Helen Gibson*, *Vivienne Riley* and others for their outstanding work in the Kingston Guild; to *Pam McKay-Edgecombe* for her unstinting work in organizing the Ham Supper; to *Emma* and *John Devenney* for their hard work with the evenings of musical entertainment *à la Newfie Kitchen Parties*; to *Teena Balding* and her wonderful crew of Sunday School teachers and helpers; to *Bev Morash*, *Emerson Hall*, and *Brian Balding* for the many repairs and fixing-up of things around the property, not least of which were the gates; to all who have assisted with the hospitality ministry of the Parish, especially with respect to our ministry and outreach to the deaf community; to *Owen Stephens* and the choir for their continued devotion and commitment to the primary task of worship; to *the students from KES* who assisted with the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, the Lobster Supper, the 125th Anniversary Celebrations, and the Ham Supper; to the students who have helped out by serving on Sundays, *Heechul*, *Eric*, *Tom*, and now *Jon*, *Hyun Jun*, *Young-Ha*, and *Sang-Hoon*; to *Bev Morash* for his unfailing devotion as layreader.

I pause to honour and remember *Brandon Smith* who was on guard in full Highland Regalia at our 125th Anniversary Celebrations along with his brother *Jared*. Brandon died in an horrible car accident in December and Jared is still in hospital seriously injured though making good and encouraging progress. *Rest Eternal grant unto Brandon, O Lord, and May your healing grace*

continue to be bestowed upon Jared. A vigil was held for Jared in December at Christ Church and Brandon's Memorial Service for the School was held at Christ Church early in 2008. Such things serve to put into perspective all that we are here for.

For as the psalmist so wonderfully reminds us, "*the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth from generation to generation.*" I pray that such words may continue to encourage us here at Christ Church. Marilyn and I thank you for the privilege of being here and continuing to serve. The Lord *is* gracious and his mercy *is* everlasting.

Fr. David Curry
Annual Rector's Report for 2007
February 10th, 2008

A Response to the draft “Anglican Covenant”

The draft proposal for “*An Anglican Covenant*” has the virtue of great economy and concision and provides a clear way forward for the Anglican Communion should the Primates and the Member Churches of the Anglican Communion, now in such serious disarray, have the wisdom to recollect the vibrant orthodoxy and commitment to Christ and his Church which belongs to our common tradition and which is so wonderfully captured in this important document.

The Anglican Covenant, now in its draft form, should be celebrated as re-establishing the common doctrinal ground of the Anglican witness to the Christian Faith in ways that provides for continuity with the rich heritage and living legacies of the past as well as for engagement with contemporary culture without sacrifice of biblical and orthodox truth.

Any Anglican Covenant that fails to recognize *The Book of Common Prayer*, *The Ordinal* and *The 39 Articles* as definitive for the essential orthodoxy and catholicity of the Anglican Communion would be attempting to create an alternative *magisterium*; in other words, a new basis for authority, and one that would only lead to discontent and schism, if for no other reason than it would mean overlooking matters of principle in favour of the vagaries of process. It is much to the credit of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s *Covenant Design Group* that they have composed such a sensible and principled document.

It is, however, a daunting task to imagine the shepherding of this document through all of the 38 member Churches of the Anglican Communion. It also seems that there is really no other option. What it all comes down to is whether member Churches really are committed to the unity of the Communion in essential matters of faith and doctrine, discipline and order. Among the many strengths of the Covenant is the provision for referral and adjudication in matters of controversy. That provision is about a process but one which seem to be clearly grounded in matters of theological principle.

At the risk of opening up an endless process of changes and emendations that might ultimately undermine the entire project, there are, I think three areas of some concern, two with respect to Section 2, “*The Life We Share: Common Catholicity, Apostolicity and Confession of Faith*”, and one with respect to Section 3, “*Our Commitment to Confession of Faith.*” In terms of “*The Life We Share: Common Catholicity, Apostolicity and Confession of Faith*”, recognizing that “*each member Church, and the Communion as a whole affirms*” that it is “*a part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit*” needs to be strengthened and clarified by way of one simple word, either a “*full*” or “*integral*” part, precisely in order to confirm an important reformed insight about the essential Catholicism of Anglicanism and to counter any sectarian tendencies which can also claim to be a part of the Church Universal, just not a whole or complete part with respect to the Creedal Confession of the Faith.

The second matter of concern is in sub-section five which refers to the foundational documents of classical Anglicanism, specifically, *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662), *The Ordinal* and *The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* as formularies through which each member Church and the Communion as a whole “*has borne witness*” to Christian truth. To say “*bears*” witness would remove all ambiguity and uncertainty about the formative and foundational status of those things

for our Anglican witness. It does not preclude other developments and alternative rites, but it establishes what has been left ambiguous in the mindset of synods and bishops, namely, that there is an authority to which all alternative liturgies are subject and by which they must be measured.

The third area of concern has to do with Section 3 of the draft Anglican Covenant, "*Our Commitment to Confession of Faith*", sub-section 5, which suggests that "*biblical texts [be] handled faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently*", a wonderful proposition that surely all would want to acknowledge, but then it goes on to say that such a desiderata be enabled "*primarily through the teaching of bishops and synods,*" which is a much more dubious proposition. That Bishops have a teaching role is part and parcel of their office though as subject to the common and essential principles of the Faith binding on clergy and laity alike, but synods historically do not exercise such a function and, in fact, the attempts on the part of synods within the member churches of the Communion to decide on matters pertaining to doctrine and the confession of Faith have led to our current problems. Removing the subordinate clause "*primarily through the teaching of bishops and synods, and building on our best scholarship*" leaves the intention of this sub-section actually clearer, more succinct and more powerful.

It may seem that such things are mere quibbles but they go to the greater issue of the Anglican Covenant itself, namely a way to hold the member Churches of the Anglican Communion accountable to matters of doctrinal principle rather than to the vagaries of power politics and the mechanics of process, the very things that have brought the Communion to the brink of self-destruction. For the first time in global Anglicanism, there is *An Anglican Covenant* which deals responsibly with the interaction and interrelation between process and principle. I pray that these efforts will by God's good grace be acknowledged and accepted by the member Churches of the Anglican Communion, to the glory of God and for the good of his Church and People.

(Rev'd) David Curry

Theological Position of the Parish of Christ Church
Windsor, Nova Scotia, in the light of the current controversies about sexuality

In the light of the present controversy within the Anglican Communion, particularly about the blessing of same-sex couples, **The Parish of Christ Church** states the following theological position:

that, The Parish of Christ Church upholds the classical understanding of Christian marriage as articulated in *The Book of Common Prayer* (Cdn., 1962); in particular, that marriage is the sanctified union of a man and a woman;

that, The Parish of Christ Church recognises that friendships are a blessing but finds no warrant in Scripture or Tradition for any equivalence between the blessing of friends and Christian marriage;

that, The Parish of Christ Church welcomes all people to the Church as the refuge of sinners regardless of any particular form of self-definition but without requiring the acceptance of any other category of definition about our humanity than what clearly belongs to the doctrines of creation, redemption or sanctification, namely, as male and female, as sinners seeking redeeming grace, and the sanctified states of life as single or married, lay or ordained.

Passed unanimously by the Parish Council of the Corporation of the Parish of Christ Church on Tuesday, October 14, 2003.

- Fr. David Curry -