

Rector's Annual Report (2014) Parish of Christ Church

"Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

It is a complaint, to be sure, a complaint that reveals a certain attitude and approach to life that Jesus will counter directly and firmly. For while complaints are, well, understandable, they can also diminish us and make us less than what we are and what we are called to be.

The attitude and approach that Jesus counters in the Gospel story of Christ in the sea-storm, "*rebuk[ing] the wind and calm[ing] the sea*", is fatalism, the cynical and negative attitude towards life that sees everything as going from bad to worse, even 'worsen and worsen'! Such a viewpoint is a self-fulfilling prophecy, really, but more importantly it is a denial of the truth of our humanity, at least as that is opened to view in the scriptural liturgy of the Church where we are constantly being reminded of who we are in the sight of God, come what may in the ups and downs of our lives individually and communally. And, certainly, there are ups and downs.

Another remarkable year, it seems to me, has slipped by, not unnoticed and not without many, many grace-notes that counter the spirit of fatalism that is such a notable feature of Maritime culture and life and beyond. The uncertainties of the contemporary world, the beginnings, finally, of an awareness that there are problems with how we think about the global world, result in a kind of passive nihilism, on the one hand, or the active nihilism of terrorism, on the other hand. We forget about the mission of the Church, about the Church as the Mission of God by virtue of its very being and existence. The buildings themselves bear witness to what is beyond them and us; in short, to our being with Christ. They are the physical witnesses to the spiritual truth of Christianity. But do we believe it? Are we committed to its truth?

I am humbled by the witness and support of so many of you in the face of decline; the general decline of the churches and of all volunteer organizations is a feature of contemporary life. You are aware of this yet you have not been awakened to it simply to join the chorus of complainers. In the Gospel story, Jesus is awakened, not to do anything about the storm, but to join the others in their misery. Instead he rebukes the wind and calms the sea, "*Peace be still.*" Only then does he speak to them. "*Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?*" Challenging words, yet profound.

Of course there are the sea storms and the winter storms of nature. Of course they can trouble us and disturb our lives. But do they define us utterly and completely? And quite apart from the storms of nature, what about the winter storms of our hearts? Our negativity? Our fearfulness? Our anxieties and worries? Our indifference? Our withdrawing into ourselves? Is that not a kind of faithlessness, a kind of fatalism? If so, we lose something of ourselves, something of our humanity. The response to Jesus is

the beginning of a kind of wonder and awe, the beginnings of worship. They said "*one to another, what manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?*" Such is a sea-change, the awakening to grace and glory.

The challenge of our Parish has been to carry on in good faith with a kind of joy and delight in the things of God made known to us in our liturgy and worship. It is all about intention and purpose, all about our witness to Christ and his Church, to the one who rebukes the wind and calms the sea. That is what defines us.

The numbers in attendance at worship are down and revenues, too, are down this year, the consequence of more and more parishioners becoming shut-in and unable to get out. Yet, we have managed to get through the year without drawing down on capital and, in general, our expenses are down as well. But the reality is that we will have to adjust to 'the new normal' in terms of a decline in committed givings. Once again the challenge is to live within our means while continuing our mission, albeit in difficult times.

We have maintained all our programmes and activities and all, I think, both in good faith and in good spirit. That is outstanding. Events such as the Newfoundland and Country Evening of Musical Entertainment in the Fall and the Spring continue to have an appeal to a certain element in the wider community. We have continued with our Christ Church Concert Series and while it has brought remarkable talent to the fore, the support for it locally has been less than what is wanted. The Capella Regalis Concert together with the pulled pork supper that accompanies it continues to be a major event and is reasonably supported. We anticipate continuing with that event. Whether we continue with a Christ Church Concert Programme in any kind of systematic way remains to be seen. I am most grateful to Owen Stephens for his labours of leadership in this regard and to Judy Gilbreath and Marilyn Curry for their culinary expertise with respect to the Capella Regalis supper. We have continued with the Christ Church Book Club and I am most grateful to those who have supported it and shown their appreciation for it. We have maintained our special Advent and Lenten programmes as well as keeping many of the feast-days of the Church, all of which provide occasions for teaching and spiritual development. The web-site and the Friends of Christ Church e-newsletters continue to attract notice and support.

Apart from some roofing (will it ever end?), we had to deal with one or two emergencies this past year. One was the appearance of a sinkhole on the exterior walkway near the vestry door; the other was the fear that the central window over the altar was about to fall out. Both were addressed and both situations have been stabilized. Overall we have not had to draw on the Foundation too much for capital repairs though increasingly for operations. This is part of the new normal.

The challenge is to try to increase our revenues at least in terms of the proposed budget. What hurt us this year was not only a decrease in envelopes but the special givings for

the Summer and Thanksgiving were down. All I can do is to appeal to your generosity and sense of commitment.

The annual report is always a time to reflect on the life of the Parish and about what it means to be the Church. We are not simply here for ourselves but neither is our being defined simply by financial contributions to the Diocese. We are Anglicans who pray for and have a sense of commitment to the wider Church of Christ. That can never simply be reduced to money. Such is the sad tragedy of our Diocese and our parishes. Our identity as an Anglican Parish in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island is not defined by allotment. If it was we would have ceased to exist as a Parish many, many years ago.

You should be under no illusions about the limitations of this diocesan policy. The argument that if you don't pay allotment you won't get a priest has been shown to be false. The Parish of Cornwallis in Port Williams exhausted its endowments to meet the allotment demands of the Diocese and now is and will continue to be without a rector since it does not have the means to support both a priest and pay the Diocese. I can think of no clearer illustration of the problems with this policy. Let me emphasize, at least for the umpteenth time, that we are an integral part of the Diocese, regardless of its confusions, and more importantly, we are committed to our Anglican identity as an integral part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and not some conventicle or sect. Let me emphasize again, at least for the umpteenth time, that we are committed to contributing to the Diocese when and if we can but not at the expense of the being of the Parish. Let me emphasize again, at least for the umpteenth time, that our life and mission is sacrificial. All of this is about being faithful in the face of the winter storms of our Church.

To rehearse all of the events of the year would be exhausting but the efforts of so many of you, working together, has been quite wonderful and fun. As it should be! My thanks to the Men's Club for their monthly breakfast meetings and their labours at so many different things such as the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, the Ham Supper, and the Lobster Supper and their labours in helping Jacoba Morash with the decorations of the Church for Thanksgiving and Christmas. My thanks to the Sanctuary Guild, particularly to Elizabeth Spurr, Muriel Fraser, Bev and Jacoba Morash, for continuing to have things ready and ship-shape for the many services of worship both on Sundays and on Holy Days. Simply splendid.

My thanks to Owen Stephens for his outstanding contributions to the liturgical worship of the Parish with his fine sense of appropriate preludes and postludes and hymn selection. My thanks to the Choir for their dedication and commitment. Simply outstanding.

My thanks to Bev Morash for his faithfulness and dedicated labours as Sexton and Layreader and to Scott and Judy for the work of maintaining our active webpage.

We have been able to maintain our outreach to the Deaf Community with a monthly service followed by a time of fellowship and refreshment provided by the labours of Muriel Fraser, Elizabeth Spurr and Bev Morash.

The Parish Council has continued to guide and direct the temporal aspects of the Parish with wisdom and care. I am most grateful to our wardens, Alex Jurgens and Scott Gilbreath, for their guidance and advice, to our secretary, Judy Gilbreath, for staying on top of the minutes, to our treasurer, Rod Kershaw, for his careful attention and commitment to the matters of finance and for undertaking the oversight of any number of practical projects, to Eric Nott, Scotty Cameron and Bev Morash for their invaluable contributions to our discussions and decisions, to Trevor Hughes for his guidance and advice as Parish Solicitor, and to Barbara Hughes for her wisdom and counsel. I am most grateful for all the support for our ministry together.

The work of the suppers - Pancake, Lobster, Ham - would not be possible without the co-operation of so many but I want to thank June and Rod Kershaw, Judy and Scott Gilbreath, Marilyn Curry, Tannis and Alex Jurgens, Gaynor and Freya Ferguson, Frances Devlin, Bev Morash, Bill Mills, Ken McBrine, Scotty and Kathy Cameron, Darrell Beaver, and the contributions of the Oulton Clan, in particular Mike and Diane Oulton.

Thanks to all of you, I have continued with teaching and chaplaincy work at King's-Edgehill School. I have taken on the tasks of being President of the local branch of the Prayer Book Society as well as continuing as Vice-President of the National Prayer Book Society, both of which occasioned a number of preaching engagements or talks, twice at St. Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown, and once at St. George's, Halifax. I have also done some lecturing at the Acadia Divinity School in January of 2014 and gave a speech on the occasion of the 225th celebration of Classics at King's and Dalhousie in Halifax.

Marilyn and I thank you for your many kindnesses and generosity, your support and friendship.

And so on it goes in prayer and praise together to the one whom even the wind and the sea obey.

Faithfully,

(Rev'd) David Curry
February 8th, 2015