

Rector's Annual Report (2015) Parish of Christ Church

"And I will show you a still more excellent way"

The concluding verse of Chapter 12 of St. Paul's *First Epistle to the Corinthians* launches us into his paen of praise to God's love and to the form of our participation in that love through the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, the greatest of which is charity. It means love. What kind of love? It is, after all, an ancient question. Among other things, we might cite Plato's famous dialogue, *The Symposium*, a drinking party in which we decide not to drink but to think and to think about love. Sounds like Lent!

That dialogue along with the Epistle and Gospel for *Quinquagesima Sunday* belongs, it seems to me, to our Lenten pilgrimage. Lent is nothing less than a learning and living out of the love of God in Jesus Christ. *"We go up to Jerusalem,"* Jesus says, and he tells us exactly what that journey entails - his suffering, his death and his resurrection. And, though he tells the disciples everything that will happen, *"they understood none of these things."* We are so often blind to the things which God is telling us. *"This saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."* We are blind and ignorant even in the face of the things that are said and heard. How will we learn? At the very least there must be in us *"the passionate desire to know"*, the *eros* of Plato's dialogue, *The Symposium*.

Lent, now so soon upon us, reminds us of the way of love which is about the whole journey of our lives and not just for a season. It is really about the whole journey of our lives with God and for God and with one another in the love of God. And that embraces especially our life together as a Parish. If our journey is not about the love of God in us through Jesus Christ, then something profound is missing. And like *"a certain blind man [sitting] by the way-side begging"*, we have to *want* to see and know in order to love and live.

It is easy to whinge and whine and wring our hands in unhappiness and despair about our world and day, about our church and culture, about our fears and worries, about death and dying. It is quite another thing to reflect in quiet joy upon the things that truly matter. What are those things? They are the things that belong to our corporate life as a community of prayer and praise, of faith and service, of Word and Sacrament; in short, doctrine in devotion. Such things are counter-culture, to be sure, and yet they are the things which truly matter. The Collect reminds us, drawing upon Paul's Epistle, that *"all our doings"* must be the forms of love without which nothing is worth anything. Love is all. The love of God shapes and perfects our human loves. Where and how do we learn that love? In the Church where *"thy true and living Word"* is faithfully proclaimed and *"thy holy Sacraments"* *"are rightly and duly administer[ed]"*, as the great prayer *"for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth"* in our liturgy puts it (BCP, p. 75). It is the Lord *"who hast taught us that all our doing without charity are nothing worth,"* as the Collect for *Quinquagesima Sunday* so emphatically reminds us.

It is our challenge to live this love both deepening our understanding of it and endeavouring to realize it in our lives. That, it seems to me, is the mission and *raison d'être* of our Parish.

The past year has been a momentous year in the life of the Parish of Christ Church. We have, I think, not only persevered with our rather full programme of events and services, that is itself note-worthy, but we have taken a huge step forward in terms of the mission of the Parish with respect to the Church building itself. This year passed marked the remarkable accomplishment of repairing the Chancel Arch with its Scriptural inscription and, *mirabile dictu*, replacing the furnaces in both the Hall and the Church with industrial ducted heat-pumps. I do not want to boast – that only gets you in trouble – but we are one of the few churches, certainly in the Diocese, who have gone this route, a route which is (we hope) both economically efficient as well as environmentally responsible. It is really all about good and responsible stewardship with respect to the things which have been entrusted to us as belonging essentially to the Christian Faith.

So far the heat-pumps seem to be working though we will want to monitor closely our electrical costs. At the very least, we won't be worrying about oil. It goes without saying that this important development would not have been possible without the generous gift of Helen Gibson to the Parish upon the occasion of her death this past year. Her commitment to the life of Christ in the Parish of Christ Church is a testament to that "*still more excellent way*" about which Paul speaks in his Epistle. Her commitment to the life of prayer and worship in the Parish was outstanding. We are indebted to her for her generosity and commitment to the Parish and thank God for her life and witness among us over the many, many years she was with us.

The year was marked by the sacrificial commitments of so many and by the collegial support and cooperation of all of you. As one looks back – and before becoming dizzy by the myriad recollections of so many events and activities – what is striking is the camaraderie and fellowship, the genuine joy and pleasure of working together. Such things are priceless. What is outstanding is your commitment to the primary being of the Parish – worship which also extends into service. A collective commitment to our life together in the body of Christ.

There is so much in that for which to be thankful. Thanks is owed to God for all of you in your labours, prayers and commitments. Last winter we made once again our winter pilgrimage to the Hall for worship returning in time for Easter, winter storms upon storms and snow upon snow notwithstanding. It was a tough winter and spring seemed a long time coming. But we survived. The year was marked by a number of special events, such as a service of Confirmation when Bishop Ron Cutler confirmed six people on *The Octave Day of Easter* and a Choral Evensong in *Michaelmas* sponsored by the Prayer Book Society of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island with guest preacher, Fr. Peter Harris, to mention but two. The Christ Church Concerts actually continued this year with two events: one in the summer with guitarist and vocalist *Thomas McCallum*; the other being the annual concert '*To Bethlehem with Kings*' with *Capella Regalis*, a much

anticipated event which took place this year on *The Fourth Sunday of Advent* just before Christmas and was much appreciated and well supported. Such things are all part of our witness and mission.

I am grateful to Owen Stephens for all of his musical labours and support for our life of worship and to the choir for their tremendous faithfulness and commitment. The singing of the liturgy is one of the forms of love and one through which in the union of music and word a theological life and understanding is shaped in us. It requires dedication and devotion. For that may God be praised. My deep thanks to our Sexton and faithful Layreader, Bev Morash, whose devotion, commitment and hard work go beyond the extraordinary. The Sanctuary Guild continues to take care of all that belongs to the necessities of worship, thanks to the labours of Muriel Fraser, Jacoba Morash, and before her unfortunate fall, Elizabeth Spurr.

Along with sermons on Sundays and Holy days as well as special programmes in Advent and Lent, we have continued with the Christ Church Book Club as yet another form of teaching and reflection. My thanks to the tremendous support of those who have been so committed to the reading of some challenging yet intriguing books.

The Parish Council has been outstanding in its responsible leadership and direction of the Parish's temporal matters, especially in the matter of undertaking to stabilize the interior of the Church in terms of humidity and heat which led to the installation of the heat-pumps, but also in the matter of repairing the plaster and the inscription on the Chancel Arch. In place of re-painting the letters, block stencils have been applied which give a very pleasing three-dimensional aspect to the Scriptural proclamation on the Chancel Arch. The installation of the heat-pumps also required the removal of the furnaces and the oil tanks from the Hall and the Church, and the taking-down of the church chimney. It was in every way a major undertaking.

My great thanks to the Christ Church Foundation for its contributions to the well-being and continuance of the Parish and to the work of our wardens, Alex Jurgens and Scott Gilbreath, our indefatigable Treasurer, Rod Kershaw, our astute Secretary, Judy Gilbreath, and to Eric Nott, Bev Morash and Scotty Cameron for all of their contributions to the work of the Parish Council on behalf of the Parish. My thanks to Barbara Hughes and Eric Nott who as honorary wardens continue to provide good advice, counsel and support and to Trevor Hughes for his counsel and advice to the Parish and the work of the Foundation.

The Newfoundland and Country Evenings of Musical Entertainment held in memory of John Devenney continue twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. I am grateful to Bev Morash and to Jacoba Morash, Moira Burgess, Francis Devlin, and others who have so kindly helped out with those events. The Men's Club has maintained its monthly breakfast programme as well as undertaking the great tasks of decorating the Church for Thanksgiving and, with Jacoba Morash's wonderful touches, for the *Capella Regalis* concert and for Christmas. My thanks to Scotty Cameron, *chef du*

matin, Darrell Beaver, Rod Kershaw, Bill Mills, Bev Morash, and Alex Jurgens for their efforts and support.

The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, the Mother's Day Weekend Lobster Supper, and the November Ham Supper went quite well again this year. Apart from their fund-raising aspect, what is note-worthy about these suppers is the collective spirit of goodwill and involvement by so many in the Parish that make them not only successful but fun. My great gratitude to June and Rod Kershaw, Tannis and Alex Jurgens, Scott and Judy Gilbreath, Marilyn Curry, Moira Burgess, Diane Oulton, Francis Devlin, Scotty and Kathy Cameron, Elizabeth Spurr, Ken McBrine, Bill Mills, Bev Morash, Gaynor Ferguson, and many others. It was in a similar spirit of cooperation that the Parish was also able to provide a reception following Helen Gibson's funeral in the spring. My thanks to all who helped and in particular to the organizing geniuses of Judy Gilbreath and Marilyn Curry. Their labours and talents, along with Scotty Cameron's, were also much in evidence in the pulled-pork supper that preceded the *Capella Regalis* concert. We have continued as well with our part in the *Atlantic Ministry of the Deaf* providing worship and a time of fellowship afterwards, for which I want to thank Muriel Fraser and Bev Morash.

All in all it was another remarkable and busy year about bearing faithful witness to Jesus Christ. We have kept up our web presence, thanks to Scott Gilbreath, and the e-newsletters to *The Friends of Christ Church* have served as another form of outreach and support for the Parish. For my part, I thank the Parish for supporting my teaching and chaplaincy at King's-Edgehill School and for other preaching, teaching, speaking and writing engagements such as at the Acadia Divinity School, the University of King's College and Dalhousie University, St. George's Round Church, Halifax and St. Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown, in this past year.

May God guide us and bless us as we endeavor to walk in love following that "*still more excellent way*" that belongs to our life and witness.

Fr. David Curry
Quinquagesima Sunday
February 7th, 2016
Annual Parish Meeting for 2015