

Rector's Annual Report (2016) Parish of Christ Church

"The seed is the word of God"

Wind and snow, ice and cold. It hardly seems like a time for planting. And yet the Gospel for *Sexagesima Sunday* speaks profoundly to the purpose and nature of our Parish life. In a way, it is all about the planting and the growth of the seed of *the word of God* in our souls and in our life together. Basil the Great, one of the Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century, captures best a defining feature of the Parish and, indeed, of Christian life in general. It certainly seems especially appropriate for our Annual Parish Meeting which is always a winter event.

He remarks that *"as all of the fruits of the season come to us in their proper time, flowers in the spring, corn in the summer, and apples in the autumn, so the fruit of winter is talk."* The fruit of the winter is talk. But what kind of talk? All our talk is to be of Jesus, of his word planted in us, growing, and maturing in us, bearing the fruit of holy talk.

The Gospel reminds us that the growth of God's word in us requires that we be the good ground, not the waste-ground of the wayside, not the rocky ground, and not the thorn-choked ground. The Gospel makes abundantly clear the nature of the metaphor. Our souls are the ground while the seed is the word of God. What is that good ground? *"They which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."*

Patience and forbearance, a certain tenacity and perseverance have been the hallmarks of our Parish in the year past. We have continued with our patterns of prayer and praise, of ministry and study. That is in itself an outstanding accomplishment. We often overlook *"the one thing necessary"* which is found in our worship, *"sitting and listening to Jesus' word"* as in the story of Mary and Martha. That story is about the interplay between action and contemplation and reminds us that our activity has to be grounded in our contemplative attention to God's Word and Son without which all our doings are worth nothing. We are called to be Marian, like that other Mary, the blessed Virgin Mother, whose 'yes' to God conceives and gives birth to God's Word and Son through her. The paradigm of the good ground is Mary's heart. *"Mary kept all these things"* that were said about the child born from her *"and pondered them in her heart."* And in the only Gospel scene of Jesus as a boy, it is Mary who *"kept all these sayings in her heart,"* his words to her and to us. *"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"* he said to her in the temple at Jerusalem. Her attention to his talk leads to faithful action. *"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it,"* she commands the servants and us at the wedding feast of Cana of Galilee. Only so can there be the miracle of water become wine, the wine of divinity for our souls. She is the supreme example in every way of *"an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep[s] it and bring[s] forth fruit with patience."*

And so the fruit of winter is talk, indeed, the talk of Christ's word in us. May that continue to be our talk at all times and in all places, and, above all, here at Christ Church.

There is so much for which to be grateful even amidst the distresses and fears and worries of our anxious world. The year past has been about your continued faithfulness and about the sacrifices and commitments that requires. I commend particularly our Parish Council for its steadfastness and fiscal prudence. It is all about living within our means while upholding the principles of our being and mission. We face the usual problems of an aging demographic but have been able to keep going, in part through substantial bequests to the Foundation that have in turn provided monies for the Parish without the sacrifice of capital. That continues to be our goal though there may be the need for certain capital outlays. To that end, a small committee has been struck to consider what the priorities might be in terms of capital projects.

2016 marked really the first full year of the heat-pumps augmented by auxiliary heat-coils. Our electrical costs are higher than expected and we are trying to find ways to fine-tune the operation and reduce expenses. The main purpose was to protect the interior fabric of the Church with perhaps the added bonus of being able to have services in the Church rather than in the Hall during the winter months. It remains to be seen whether that will always be possible. We are fortunate to have the Hall as our spiritual redoubt.

The Parish has benefited over the years from the outstanding leadership provided by Eric Nott and Barbara Hughes and it would be remiss not to single them out for special mention. They have been instrumental in the matter of the relative stability of the Parish in uncertain and difficult times. On behalf of the Parish, I can only offer a heartfelt thank you to them. Our wardens, Alex Jurgens and Scott Gilbreath, along with the other stalwart members of the Parish Council, Rod Kershaw, our Treasurer, and Judy Gilbreath, our Secretary, and Scotty Cameron and Bev Morash have provided consistent and responsible direction, particularly with respect to future planning about how best to keep things in good working order.

In the early summer, we hired a large dumpster and undertook a massive clean-up of the Hall, throwing out the accumulated detritus of decades upon decades. Our thanks to all who helped with that event, in particular our 'parishioners' from away, the Very Rev'd Canon John Parks and his wife Susan who worship with us when they are at their summer base in Hall's Harbour. Their presence and support are greatly appreciated. It is also wonderful to see on occasion James and Patricia Clark who manage to get to the Parish once or twice a year from Texas and who stay in touch *via* our website. On that score, great thanks are owed to Scott Gilbreath for maintaining the website and keeping things posted. This has proved to be a valuable form of outreach and mission.

We have continued with the Christ Church Book Club and I am most grateful for the support and interest of Alex Jurgens, Francis Devlin, Barbara Hughes, Eleanor Currie, and Ken Warren as well as others who, while not always able to attend, appreciate the books on offer. This, too, is part of our life and witness.

Among the special events of the year past was the 100th anniversary commemoration of the laying-up of the Colours of the 112th battalion here at Christ Church. The Lt.Gov, the Honourable J.J. Grant and her Honour, Mrs. Grant, were present for the service along with a host of provincial, municipal, and military dignitaries. The service called attention to the role and place of the Parish in the history of the town, the province, and the nation. A short video of the service and event was prepared which can be accessed on our website.

For the second year in a row we were unable to put on the annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper because of snowstorms but remain in hope for this year. The Lobster Supper continues to be a success, as well as the Ham Supper, with thanks to a host of people: Alex and Tannis Jurgens, Rod and June Kershaw, Lynn Pascoe, Moira Burgess and family, Gaynor Ferguson, Darrell Beaver, Scotty and Kathy Cameron, Diane and Mike Oulton, Dianna and David Oulton, Nova Dawn Oulton, Eileen Colhoun, Muriel and Alan Fraser, Mary Ann Dufour, Francis Devlin, Bill Mills, Emma Devenney, Scott and Judy Gilbreath, Ken Warren, Marilyn Curry, Elizabeth Spurr, Renée Corradini, Linda Parker, Barbara Hughes, Eric and Jackie Nott, and Bev and Jacoba Morash. These events have proved to be wonderful occasions not just as fund-raisers but of camaraderie and fellowship involving a great number of you working together and, dare I say, having fun. Such things are noteworthy because of the positive spirit of goodwill (and hard work!). The Men's Club has continued with its monthly breakfast meetings which provide a time for fellowship. My thanks, in particular, to Scotty Cameron and Darrell Beaver: the latter for the eggs; the former for the set-up and cooking. The Newfoundland and Country Evenings of Musical Entertainment, one in the Fall and the other in the Spring, have continued as well, in part through the efforts and labours of Bev Morash but also of the ladies who contribute the cookies! They continue in memory of John Devenney.

The Capella Regalis concert, preceded by pulled-pork supper, continues to be a most welcome and successful event and a form of outreach on the part of the Parish. Thanks to many but especially to Judy Gilbreath, Marilyn Curry, Scotty Cameron, Jacoba Morash, and to Ken Warren. Much thanks is owed to Jacoba Morash whose decorative touch for that event and for Christmas at Christ Church is much celebrated and much appreciated. The Parish, too, continues to host the Advent and Christmas Service of Lessons and Carols with King's-Edgehill as well as the spring Church Parade of the Cadet Corps. Such things are all part and parcel of the being of the Parish and the reason for its existence.

Our services are enhanced and blessed with the liturgical musical skills of our organist, Owen Stephens, as well as with the singing of the Choir which contributes to the intentional integrity and beauty of the services. Over the years, our sexton has also functioned as a lay-reader. Bev Morash's devotion, commitment, and service to the Parish has been simply outstanding over many, many years but he has reached a point where even he - and that is saying a lot - recognizes that there are things that he can now no longer do and be expected to do at least to the same extent. As always it will be about finding ways to get the things done property wise and so forth that need to be done while allowing people to continue to contribute in ways that are appropriate for them. The same thing goes with the sanctuary guild through the labours of Bev and Jacoba Morash, Muriel Fraser, and Elizabeth Spurr. Such things are always appreciated whenever and to what extent each can contribute.

What is most important and I think very apparent in the life of our Parish is the degree to which people make the effort to help out one another. It is that spirit of goodwill and cooperation which is so important and so noteworthy. Such things are, I think, about the seed that is the word of God planted and growing in our hearts and souls.

For my part, I am grateful for the support and care of so many of you and for the privilege of being your priest and pastor. I am particularly grateful for your support of my work and ministry at King's-Edgehill School. In the year past, I have also been busy in a number of extra-parochial ventures such as lecturing on Christian Ethics at the Acadia Divinity School, serving on a Diocesan Task Force dealing with Physician-Assisted Dying, leading a quiet day in Lent for the Prayer Book Society of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, giving a paper on "*Reimagining the Church in the Scriptures*" at the Atlantic Theological Conference, preaching at St. George's, Halifax, at St. Edward's, Clementsport, and at St. Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown. These are all things which belong to the teaching ministry of the confessing Church, all part of the planting of the seed which is the word of God in our souls.

Fr. David Curry
Sexagesima Sunday
February 19th, 2017
Annual Parish Meeting for 2016