

Rector's Annual Report for 2018

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'

T. S. Eliot's celebrated poem, *The Journey of the Magi*, begins with this passage from one of Lancelot Andrewes' Sermons on the Nativity. Eliot had great respect for Andrewes. His work, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, is an account of his own conversion to orthodox Christianity in the form of Anglo-Catholicism and begins with an essay on Andrewes before going on to treat other writers who have contributed to the development of his thought. Yet they are all gathered under the formative influence of Andrewes on Eliot, an influence which is about *the harmony of intellect and sensibility*, the very things for which Eliot sought in his own poetry.

"*The very dead of winter*" seems best now for retreats to warmer climes or failing that, for hibernation, itself a fine Maritime tradition, but it is also the time for, of all things, annual meetings. The winter, it seems, is the time for talk and for talk about things which really matter, for talk about God and about our life with God. A time for reflection, for contemplation. That, surely, is a good thing.

This year the last Sunday of Epiphany is Epiphany V. The Collect composed by John Cosin in the 17th century complements the Epistle and Gospel which he appointed to be read on this Sunday but which would also serve as the readings for the late Sundays in the Trinity Season. They concern judgement and hope seen either through the lens of the Epiphany theme of the manifestation of the divinity of Christ or through the lens of the Trinity season about the growth (or non-growth!) of grace in our lives. Either way the readings are about the word of God sown in our lives while in the midst of the trials, uncertainties, and evils of the world, a world where wheat and tares grow up together.

"*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,*" Paul exhorts us. It could serve as the maxim for our life together as a Parish. As the parable from Matthew's Gospel suggests, that means patience and forbearance about the sowing of the good seed in a world where wheat and weeds grow together. "*Let them both grow together until the harvest.*" Our hope in the harvest gathering is to be the wheat and not the tares; the wheat gathered into the barn of heaven rather than the tares bundled and burned. The hope of the Gospel is emphatically not a worldly hope.

As the Collect suggests, our life is really all about "*lean[ing] only on the hope of thy heavenly grace*" by which we "*may evermore be defended by thy mighty power*". This requires that "*whatsoever ye do, in word and deed, do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through him*". Our life as a Parish is about the quality of our life in Christ in prayer and praise, in word and sacrament, regardless of the quality or temper of the

times. "A cold coming" and "in the very dead of winter" notwithstanding, we journey with Christ. We do so, I hope and pray, with goodwill and charity and with a cheerful spirit, "singing with grace in your hearts to God," as Paul puts it.

It has been another busy year in which as priest and people together, as a parish, in other words, we have continued in our patterns of worship and teaching as well as the regular aspects of the life of the Parish such as the Ham Supper, the Capella Regalis Concert with the pulled-pork supper preceding it, and, of course, the Lobster Supper on the Mother's Day weekend. Those events continue to be both hard work and enjoyable occasions owing to the ability and willingness of everybody to work together and to do so pleasantly and with good humour. That makes all the difference.

We have endeavoured to honour those whose contributions to the life of the Parish have been deemed worthy of notice such as the plaque honouring Bev Morash's work as lay-reader and sexton, and the plaque honouring the remarkable labours of Cecilia Pascoe, Aggie Langille, Jacoba Morash, Elizabeth Spurr, and Muriel Fraser in the Sanctuary Guild.

As a Parish, we are most grateful for the faithful labours of Owen Stephens who along with the choir contribute so much in terms of music that corroborates, complements and enhances the liturgy and to such a remarkable extent. I call your attention to the wonderful preludes and postludes which Owen provides which are always situated within the liturgical and devotional patterns of worship.

We have been blessed this year with the Appleby family and the way in which they have embraced and become so much a part of the Parish. They first came on *The Sunday after Christmas* last year and from that time have embarked upon a remarkable spiritual journey. David and Jen were baptized at *Easter* and confirmed on *The Octave Day of Easter*; Blythe was baptized in the Fall. Bronwyn is a most welcome addition to the choir and we are delighted that Blythe and Bronwyn together share the burden of being our bell-ringers! Such things are among the many grace-notes that belong to the journey of the parish in these uncertain times.

The Parish Council is outstanding in its steadfastness and commitment. My thanks to our Wardens, Alex Jurgens and Scott Gilbreath, to our Treasurer, Rod Kershaw, and the Assistant Treasurer, Kathy Cameron, to Judy Gilbreath, our Secretary, to Scotty Cameron, and to Bev Morash. Along with our honorary wardens, Eric Nott and Barbara Hughes, and with the counsel of Trevor Hughes, our barrister and solicitor, they have kept the Parish going on an even keel. Under their leadership and with the help of the Christ Church Foundation, this year saw the completion (finally) of a number of important projects mostly dealing with stairs! Stairs to the Hall and the Church were replaced, the main porch entrance of the Church was rebuilt, and the ramp to the concrete walkway, now adorned with handrails, was completed. Siding was replaced where it had blown off on the spire. Lights were installed on the King Street side of the Church. All of these things are about our commitment to maintain spiritually and physically the heritage and mission of the Parish. It is really about recognising what we

can do and working responsibly within the limits of our abilities at the same time as continuing to challenge ourselves.

The Christ Church Book Club has continued with its meetings and discussions on what is often an intriguing array of books. I am most grateful for their support and interest. Such things are part of the intellectual and spiritual life of the Parish. The Parish teaching programmes in Advent and Lent continue to be an important part of our life and witness. This year saw the actual use of the Exhortations to Communion (BCP, pp. 88-92), which is very much about important teaching and one which I fear has been sadly neglected. I confess that this is the first time in my ministry that I have used the Exhortations! In doing so, I have been blown away by their teaching.

Thanks to the Parish, in no small measure, I continue with my labours and ministry at King's-Edgehill School as teacher and Chaplain. This year saw the inclusion of my weekly Chapel Reflection for the School's e-newsletter being put on our website which continues to be managed and curated so wonderfully by Scott Gilbreath. Such things contribute to our outreach and ministry and belong very much to the pressing questions about the important role and place of religion in education.

I have served as well on a Diocesan Task Force on Death and Dying, now called M.a.i.d, Medical Assistance in Dying, in my role as a theologian. There are a host of ethical dilemmas which are part of the confusions of our world and day. I have made available some papers which I have written on these matters. Such things are really about how we deal in charity and in truth with our contemporary world in its certainties and uncertainties even in matters that are ethically and spiritually at odds with the Christian Faith. At issue in my view are questions about autonomy and agency, about dying with grace. Wanting to die and allowing death to happen is one thing; hastening and causing death is something else altogether. I have wanted to uphold the rich and profound teachings about redemptive suffering which belong to the literature of consolation or comfort. The Prayer Book itself provides ample teaching on that score.

A paper, "*Redire ad Principia: The Dance of Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology in Lancelot Andrewes*", which I gave the year before at a Colloquium in Halifax, *Wisdom Belongs to God*, has just been published in the journal *Dionysius* (vol. XXXVI, Dec. 2018). I also gave a short talk in March of 2018, *Like Eagles in this Life*, dealing with aspects of Anglican sacramental theology in the Common Prayer tradition to students at the University of King's College in Halifax.

And so on it goes, "*a journey and such a long journey,*" and often "*in the very dead of winter,*" and yet one in which there is much grace and much joy, all to the glory of God. And for that may God be praised and may you be blessed for all your faithfulness and commitment to the things which matter and which matter most and always.

Blessings,

(Rev'd) David Curry
February 10th, 2019