

Rector's Annual Report for 2022
February 19th, 2023

"Prayer the Churches banquet, Angels age/Gods breath in man returning to his birth,/ the soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage." These are the opening lines of a lovely sonnet called Prayer (1) by George Herbert. The whole poem is a rich medley of images drawn from Scripture, from the traditions of Christian theology and spirituality, from music, from the liturgy of the Church, from domestic life, and from things remote and exotic, from things near and far way. "Church-bels beyond the starres heard, the souls bloud." It ends with two words that are not images but the meaning of them: "something understood." Prayer in all of these various images, ranging from "the Churches banquet," a reference to the Eucharist, to "the land of spices," a reference to the voyages of discovery and to what is exotic, is something understood. Thus the poem is not simply a random collection of images. The point is that something is understood in and through the images and not in flight from them.

There is something understood, meaning doctrine or teaching, that is conveyed through each image and in their order and sequence. Prayer is about our lives in pilgrimage through which we participate in the ways the grace of God is conveyed to us. Thus prayer is "Heaven in ordinarie, man well drest"; a reference to a passage from Augustine about looking at the Creed and seeing yourself in it as in a mirror, being dressed in the essential doctrines of the Faith, we might say. The Creeds come out of the Scriptures and return us to them in an order of understanding. In many ways, the poem signals a central feature of the liturgy and thus the life of the Parish in these uncertain times. It is simply doctrine in devotion.

That has been the constant and recurring point of emphasis in the forms of our encounter in prayer and praise with God in his eternal motions of love which belong to God in himself and God for us in his motions towards us. We constantly seek to enter more fully into the circling motions of divine love that belong to the interplay of the different seasons, and the feasts and festivals of the Church's life. The underlying patterns of reformed catholicism are the interplay of *justification* - what God in Christ has done for us; *sanctification* - Christ in us through the gift of the Holy Spirit; and *glorification* - our end in God as imaged through the Communion of Saints. As the Creeds teach us, all three moments reflect the idea of penitential adoration through a focus on the forgiveness of sins. "Repentance," Lancelot Andrewes says in an Ash Wednesday sermon, "is nothing else but *redire ad principia*, 'a kind of circling', to return to Him by repentance from Whom by sin we have turned away".

That kind of circling is love, the divine love seeking the perfection of our imperfect human loves which is set before us on Quinquagesima Sunday. Lent concentrates the whole idea of Christian pilgrimage into the span of forty days in terms of the interplay and interpenetration of illumination, purgation, and perfection or union that constitute the classical nature of the soul's journey to God, *itinerarium mentis in Deum*, as in

Bonaventure's classical treatise. It is really all about a kind of circling around and into the mystery of God and of God with us. "We go up to Jerusalem," Jesus says. We go up with Christ. We do so in the hopes of learning more clearly the nature of what Herbert in another poem calls "two vast spacious things" that transcend our human capacities to know, namely, "sin and love." To understand something about those is the point of the Lenten journey understood as the pilgrimage of love, the love which never faileth as Paul says but which belongs to the good of our humanity in God through the uncertainties and confusions of our world and day. That pilgrimage of love is our life in prayer as "something understood." It is a kind of circling around and into the mystery of God.

The past year has certainly had its challenges in the fall-out from Covid. We have persevered with our services and programmes, with our commitment to prayer and service within the limitations that we confront. The year began with an episcopally mandated lock-down owing to fears about the omicron variant of Covid. We reverted to a recorded Sunday service of Matins and Ante-Communion sent out through our Christ Church Connections platform. We have kept this going since the early days of Covid, and it seems to have been helpful and well-received. Along with the return to services in the bleak midwinter of 2022, there was the return to the Church of other things such as a Capella Regalis concert now under the aegis of Musique Royale. It was nice to see how well that initiative was supported by the wider community. Later in the Fall, we were able to host our 'annual' Ham Supper which was also very well-received.

Thanks to the hard work and support of all of you we have been able to carry on faithfully. My thanks to Owen Stephens for his invaluable ministry of music and to the choir for their perseverance and dedication. Thanks to Marilyn Curry and Judy Gilbreath, the work of the sanctuary guild has continued in preparing the altar for services each Sunday and for mid-week services as well. The Parish Council has been outstanding in their commitment to the welfare of the Parish and one of the great developments in the Parish this past year has been the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Parish Hall. We have had to wait until mid-January for them to be hooked-up to the power grid but we have every reason to expect that this investment will contribute to the lowering of our electrical costs. Wifi has been installed as well in both the Church and the Hall which has made it easier to send out the Christ Church Connections emails.

Scott Gilbreath has decided to step down as warden after many, many years of devoted and faithful service and I want to thank him on behalf of the Parish for his service over the many difficult years that we have weathered through together. I am happy to say that he is continuing to run the web-site which is a valuable part of our witness. As his report indicates, somehow traffic to our site increased in 2022. Go figure! But many thanks, Scott! I am also very grateful for the leadership of Alex Jurgens as warden and who oversaw the solar panels project for us, for the hard work of Kathy Cameron with respect to the finances, for the dedication of Judy Gilbreath as secretary, to David and Jen Appleby, and to Scotty Cameron for their constant support and encouragement. Kathy, Scotty, and Nikki Cameron and Blythe Appleby have helped to keep up with the regular cleaning of

the Hall and Church. Everyone has shown a great willingness to jump in whenever something was needed to be done. We continue to face certain challenges with respect to the Rose Window in the Church, the window sills in the Church nave, and the north side of the Hall roof. We are grateful for the support of the Christ Church Foundation which contributes to our ability to function. Our constant concern is about living within our limits and acting prudently and carefully while maintaining the mission of the Parish. We have undertaken programmes of support to those in need by way of gift cards; we have also participated in the Missions to Seafarers shoe-box campaign, and have contributed to the Diocese at least some monies. But it has been a difficult year in terms of investments and expenses. This is not surprising; it is simply the context in which our life and witness occurs. "This shall be a time for you to bear witness", Jesus says, and so it is.

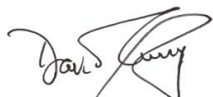
We have continued with teaching programmes in Advent and Lent as well as with the Christ Church Book Club. I have continued in my role as teacher and chaplain at King's-Edgehill. In the spring, I participated in the Atlantic Theological Conference and gave a presentation on Louise Penny's novel, *The Madness of Crowds*. In September, I was asked to contribute a paper on the Holy Spirit to a book to be published sometime this year out of Pusey House, Oxford.

In August, a group of priests belonging to an Anglican order known as SSC, the Society of the Holy Cross, met at Christ Church. This was at the initiative of Canon John Park who has been associated with our Parish in the summer months. I gave a paper on the priest as "A Walking Sacrament" by way of George Herbert's poem, "Aaron". In mid-December, we gathered in the Church for the funeral of Bev Morash, our dedicated and hard-working Sexton and Lay-reader for many, many years. In many ways, the funeral was testament to the faithfulness of Bev and Jacoba about prayer and worship. We can only be grateful for his service and care for the Parish. We greatly miss him.

What has been particularly outstanding has been the quiet determination, faithfulness and prayerfulness of all of you which is, I think, strongly felt at every service. It is very much about being a people of prayer who are always seeking "something understood."

For that may God be praised and may his grace continue to guide us.

Humbly submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Curry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and the last name "Curry" clearly distinguishable.

Fr. David Curry