

Rector's Annual Report for 2019
February 9th, 2020
"Go ye also into the vineyard"

The transitions from one season of the Church Year to another and even from one Sunday to the next are intriguing and instructive. They remind us of the necessity of the patterns and rhythms that belong to spiritual life and to the importance of regular worship, week in and week out. That sense of regularity and commitment has often been a challenge and a problem for the institutional churches, particularly in our rural parishes but also in our towns and cities. At issue is any sense of clarity and commitment to what the Church is and teaches. It remains the principal problem with respect to church attendance and, consequently, to the very existence of the institutional church in the form of parishes and dioceses.

For more than fifty years, parishes and dioceses have had to deal not only with that challenge but with a more modern problem, the re-defining of the churches as franchises of a centralized bureaucracy both at the diocesan level and in terms of the national churches. This 'model' replaces the idea of doctrinal unity grounded in the teachings embodied in liturgy and worship with conformity, first, to the ever-changing mantras and agendas of technocratic culture, and, secondly, to the excessive burdens of a form of taxation that support centralized bureaucracies at the expense of the very existence of parishes themselves. Salvation by allotment alone is simply death by parochial suicide. In other words, faith is defined more in terms of belonging to the institutional structures and the finances required to maintain them than to the principles of Faith belonging to our history and theology. Belonging trumps believing.

While recognizing that polity - the order of the Church - is part of Christian identity since the "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" is an article of Faith, the fatal subordination of parishes to the unrelenting financial demands of the centralized bureaucracies of the diocesan and national churches results in the unsurprising yet demoralizing collapse of Parishes and, by extension and consequence, to the diocesan and national structures themselves. This faux corporate model imitates the secular corporate culture of big business (i.e. Bishops as CEOs) but the model betrays the corporate life of faith centered on worship and service. And it is, quite simply, unsustainable. Having bled the Parishes to death, it is not surprising that the national church now forecasts that not much will be left of the Anglican Church by 2040. It is, sadly, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Needless to say, at Christ Church we remain committed to the principles of the Faith that belong to our corporate identity as "an integral portion of the One Body of Christ" united "in the fellowship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church" expressed so wonderfully in the Solemn Declaration of 1893 which references clearly the Scriptures, the Creeds, and the "undisputed Ecumenical Councils" as the ground and basis of doctrine and spiritual life. That includes as well our commitment to 'Bishops' and to the diocese and the national churches even in their confusions, knowing that "they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God," as Article XXI of the

Thirty-nine Articles of Religion pertinently puts it. In short, we recognize not the *infallibility* of the Church in its polity and structures but its *fallibility*, “wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture” (Art. XXI, BCP, p. 707).

As such we have tried to be faithful to what properly belongs to our corporate life without compromising the existence of the Parish to the demands of the diocesan and national churches and their agendas. What the Church is and teaches is not found in the pronouncements of Bishops and Synods both of which are properly subject to those same principles of the Faith that have been received in our Anglican polity.

There is confusion and uncertainty about Faith and about the Church because secondary concerns of a social and political nature or even ‘matters indifferent,’ which may be true and important, have been allowed to usurp and supplant the essential principles of the Christian Faith which alone provide the real basis for the Church’s witness and life and for the possibility of a principled engagement with other religions and cultures, including the aggressive atheism of contemporary culture. I would like to think that the endeavour to think the essentials of the Christian Faith philosophically allows for a charitable and principled way to navigate our way through the various confusions of identity politics and the divorce of the ethical from the political that bedevils our current discourse and institutional life. In short, we are reminded that we are *in* the world but not *of* the world.

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, in a lovely little book called “Being Christian” (2014), focuses on Baptism, the Bible, the Eucharist, and Prayer without a single mention of the institutional church in its preoccupations and demands. Instead the focus is entirely theological, “letting Jesus pray in us,” for instance, and reminding us by way of Origen, that “the whole of our life says, Our Father.” Our contemporary disconnect from the riches of our own theological heritage in its living truth is at the heart of our discontents. His references to that heritage by way of the Prayer Book are quietly telling.

The struggle is to keep our attention on the things of God. The transition from the Epiphany season to the Gesima Sundays of Pre-lent is illuminating. Epiphany ended not only with the double-barrelled feast of “The Presentation of Christ in the Temple commonly called The Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin” but with the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany. “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” The story of Christ rebuking the wind and calming the sea highlights the Epiphany theme of the making known of the essential divinity of Christ through his humanity. Things are made known about God and about the divine will for our humanity in the wonderful teachings of the Epiphany. What is made known outwardly has now to be realized inwardly. This is the point of the Gesima Sundays with their focus on the virtues of the soul as transformed by the grace of God for our humanity in Christ. It is very much about how we deal with the world around us without succumbing to being defined by the world; in short, how we deal with the storms of the world. “Why,” Christ so pointedly asks, “are ye so fearful?”

“Go ye also into the vineyard,” the Gospel for Septuagesima tells us and “whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.” The highest and the greatest of the four classical virtues or qualities of excellence of character is justice, identified here as “whatsoever is right”. While the Gospel story challenges our sense of distributive justice, it highlights the primacy of the *justitia dei*, the justice of God which seeks the greater good of our humanity collectively and individually. It is a higher form of justice than what the world offers and has the power to transcend the politics of envy and self-righteousness that inhibit the building up of a community of service and sacrifice. The lessons of the Gesima Sundays and of the Lenten Sundays for which they prepare us are all about the inward principles of character that properly define us and our lives in the world. They draw us into the life of Christ in his service and sacrifice.

The virtues of temperance, courage, prudence, and justice undergo a kind of “sea-change into something rich and strange” (Shakespeare, *The Tempest*) through the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. These are truly transformative in the renewing of our minds and in the inward appropriation of the teachings of Christ. This is the counter to the ways in which the social media world of our technocratic culture seeks to define and control us. A character in Timothy Findley’s Canadian classic novel “*The Wars*,” written in 1977, long before the advent of the dominance of our technological dependencies, makes the astute observation that the necessary task is “to clarify who you are by your response to the time in which you lived.” As Brian Doyle observes in a little essay, *The Final Frontier*, “all you can do is face the world with quiet grace and hope you make a sliver of difference” (“*One Long River of Song*”).

That complements what we see in the transition from Epiphany to Septuagesima. The making known outwardly of the essential divinity of Christ and the will of God for our humanity has to be realized inwardly in us. It is about our attention to our corporate identity in Christ over and against the forces of the world and its agendas. Here is the possibility of the redemption of the world but not if the churches have collapsed into the world and have nothing to say to the world in which we live. For then we will have failed to clarify who we are and how we might speak to the confusions of our world and culture. This is and continues to be the mission and the challenge of our witness in the midst of the confusions and hostilities of our age. I would like to think that this is our mission and witness at Christ Church. “Go ye also into the vineyard.” It is a lovely image about our mission and life and grounds us in the life of Christ. “Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.”

The past year has been full and, I hope, fulfilling at least in our attention to the things that belong to our corporate identity as grounded in the life of worship and teaching. We have continued with our teaching programmes in Advent and Lent and at other times. Through the website, maintained so faithfully and thoughtfully by Scott Gilbreath, our life and witness reaches out beyond the Parish itself. That the digital traffic is down slightly from last year is a feature of the exponential growth of the digital world and its many confusions. We have not played the game of search engine optimization in the quest for clicks. It is more a matter of persisting with the patient yet hard-work of teaching

and thinking about the Christian faith philosophically. To that end, I have continued to post the weekly write-up of Chapel homilies at King's-Edgehill School which are an endeavour to engage a post-Christian and post-secular world with religious and philosophical ideas. They are a part of the weekly e-newsletter of the School but I hope are of some interest to the Parish and the Friends of Christ Church. I recognise that not everyone is digitally conversant so Chapel reflections have also been made available in print at the back of the Church and Hall for those who may be interested.

The Christ Church Book Club with its eclectic and often demanding collection of books continues and I marvel at the commitment and interest of its dedicated devotees. In a way, it is about engaging the contemporary world thoughtfully in its breadth and in the attempt to think more deeply about the forms of the modern narrative or story which increasingly is being challenged and corrected. At the very least, it offers a bit of a corrective to the shallower forms of discourse that predominate in our media world.

The regular patterns of worship and teaching are complemented by our annual parish events such as the Lobster Supper in May and the Ham Supper in November, events which involve a lot of effort and hard work but which are so rewarding because of the camaraderie, fellowship, and good will which attends them. I commend all of you on your labour and commitment to these events which are both social and spiritual and testify to the corporate life of the Parish. The Men's Club monthly breakfast on Sundays after the 8am service continues thanks to the culinary talents and labour of Scotty Cameron.

We have continued as well with the Newfoundland and Country Evenings of Musical Entertainment, one in the Spring and one in the Fall. The one in the Fall was moved to November in order to celebrate one of the regular contributors, Dorothy Rogers, on the occasion of her eightieth birthday. Unfortunately, Capella Regalis was not able to come to Christ Church and to Windsor this year, much to the dismay of many in the community.

We have made some changes to the operation of the Parish owing to the age and health of those who have laboured so long and hard in the work of keeping up the physical plant of the Parish. Bev Morash, who has been the sexton and lay-reader of the Parish for many years, stepped down formally this year. We are most grateful for his service and commitment to the Parish. Blythe Appleby has undertaken responsibilities for helping out with the cleaning of the Hall while Kathy and Scotty Cameron assist with the putting out of the garbage. The sanctuary guild no longer functions in a formal sense but a number of people such as Jen, Bronwyn, and Blythe Appleby, and Marilyn Curry have stepped up to help Jacoba Morash and to insure that things continue to be in readiness for worship. David Appleby and Scotty Cameron helped to organise a massive clean-up of the steeple, a work which continues in progress and will extend to the cleaning up of the basement of the Church and the basement of the Coronation Room of the Hall in the spring of 2020. All in all, the life of the Parish is about working together in a good and harmonious way from Sunday to Sunday. It is very much about "bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ." Wonderful.

The Parish continues to benefit musically and spiritually from the labour and effort of our Organist and Choir Director, Owen Stephens, and the commitment of the Choir. The preludes and postludes complement the pattern and teaching of the Scriptural readings, and it is altogether remarkable that the Parish is able to continue to sing the liturgy and in particular such things as the gradual psalm. These are features that belong to the intentional life of the Parish in its attention to the Scriptures and the formative ways in which music and Word shape our lives. Along with singing in the choir, Bronwyn and Blythe Appleby have been our faithful bell-ringers each Sunday. Many thanks!

The Parish Council has continued to provide exemplary leadership during a year of changes. We owe an outstanding debt of thanks to Rod Kershaw, our Parish Treasurer, who has guided us financially so ably and well over many years but who now wishes to step down. In his place, Kathy Cameron has undertaken the accounting functions of the Parish aided by Alex Jurgens in fiduciary matters. Scott Gilbreath and Alex Jurgens have provided stable and solid leadership as the wardens of the Parish. Judy Gilbreath has continued as secretary, providing excellent minutes of the Parish Council over the course of the year. The Council has benefited enormously from the contributions to the decisions and actions of the Council by David and Jen Appleby, Scotty Cameron and Bev Morash. We are grateful for the vigilance and care of Trevor Hughes as barrister and solicitor of the Parish, especially in these uncertain times.

We have continued to try to keep up with the property demands that belong to the life and witness of the Parish. Such things along with the basic operation of the Parish depend in part on the contributions of the Christ Church Foundation which exists for the well-being of the Parish. A number of projects remain before us such as replacing the sills of the windows and seeing what can be done about the siding of the Church. Taking a prudential approach to the maintenance of the Parish has resulted in a successful year financially and has allowed us to contribute \$ 5000.00 to the Diocese, itself a sizable and sacrificial amount.

The past year has seen the departure from the Windsor community of Eric and Jackie Nott who have taken up residence in a retirement home in the New Glasgow area closer to immediate family. For years, Eric was a faithful warden of the Parish and one of its strongest supporters and, in latter years, one of our honorary wardens along with Barbara Hughes. We miss Eric but wish him and Jackie all the best. We are grateful for the continued support and interest of Barbara, honorary warden.

The Parish continues to exercise out-reach with weekly services at Haliburton Place in the West Hants Community Hospital, twice-monthly services at Windsor Elms in Falmouth, and monthly services at Dykeland Lodge. We continue to participate in the ecumenical services on Good Friday and Easter morning. The Parish Hall is actively used as the venue for several Girl Guide programmes: Sparks, Brownies, and Pathfinders/Rangers. It has since early Fall become the rehearsal space for the Four Seasons Community Orchestra on a modest rental basis. All of this is part of the life and witness of the Parish in our times.

Thanks to the support of the Parish, I continue to teach at King's-Edgehill School and as Chaplain, with four morning services weekly at the School. In Lent last year, I led a Quiet Day and preached in Philadelphia. Along with such things, I contributed an article entitled 'Such a Long Journey,' a meditation on T.S. Eliot's poem, "The Journey of the Magi," for a *festschrift* honouring the many years of university teaching at King's College, Halifax, of a friend of mine, the Rev'd Dr. Thomas Curran. I was also asked to contribute to a book, "Christ Unabridged," that will be coming out shortly in 2020. The book contains a range of papers by a number of theologians who were present at a conference, 'Totus Christus,' held at Pusey House, Oxford University, in 2018, among whom were Rowan Williams, N.T. Wright, and Kallistos Ware. My modest contribution supplements the discussions by way of a paper about the sacramental theology of Lancelot Andrewes and John Bramhall, building upon the teaching and scholarship of one of my mentors, The Rev'd Dr. Robert Crouse.

On a personal note, Marilyn and I travelled in August to Dublin, Ireland, where our daughter, Elizabeth, and our son-in-law, Evan, along with our grandson, Silas, are now resident. Evan and Elizabeth are engaged in an academic research project. We got there in time for the birth of our grand-daughter, Anna. They are all doing very well, at least as much as we can tell from "whats app" video calls! Our son, Joel, is in Taipei, Taiwan, and Madeleine, is in Toronto. We anticipate being away for the Thanksgiving weekend this October 2020 for her wedding in Toronto.

"Fight the good fight," Eric Nott frequently reminded and encouraged me and I hope that is exactly what we have been trying to do as priest and people together in the remarkable life of the Parish of Christ Church. May God be praised for all your support and labours.

In Christ,

Fr. David Curry
Septuagesima Sunday
February 9th, 2020