

Rector's Annual Report for 2020

“But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart,
having
heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

February 7th, 2021

Patience. In many ways, it has been a year that has required great patience and perseverance, a year of trials, in part, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I say ‘in part’ because struggles and trials, difficulties and tribulations are a constant feature of human experience. The question really is about how such things are faced. That has been the question for Christ Church as a Parish and for the wider Church and culture as well.

Timothy Findley’s novel, “The Wars”, written in 1977, offers an important insight into how difficult and catastrophic things are faced which complements, I think, the Sexagesima Gospel. The point is not to take refuge in tragedy but “to clarify who you are through your response to when you lived”. This is wisdom, it seems to me. It points to the activity of our souls, to what is alive in us. As a Parish, we have weathered the *sturm und drang*, the storm and stress of the current concerns with COVID-19 quite well. Thanks to the hard work and leadership of the Parish Council, we have taken the courage to do two things: first, to spell out some of the potential scenarios for the future of the Parish; and, secondly, to articulate a Parish protocol in accord with the requirements of the Department of Public Health that have allowed us to be able to continue with “in-person worship”, to use the phrase *du jour*, responsibly, creatively, and with reasonable flexibility.

In the early days of the pandemic, we were closed but maintained contact with the Parish and with many ‘Friends of Christ Church’ via the Christ Church Connections. That has continued and developed even after we were able to be open again starting on Trinity Sunday in June. We were one of the few churches in the Diocese and in the Province that found ways to be open safely, with a reasonable set of protocols in place, and with a minimum of fuss. I am most grateful for the response of the Parish as a whole to these protocols, and for the trust and confidence that you have shown in the face of these troubling and uncertain times. The point is about carrying on faithfully in what belongs to our mission and life as a Parish in worship and teaching, in care and compassion. The mantra has been “be not fearful but careful”. We have been fortunate that the situation in this part of Canada and the Province has allowed us to continue.

By virtue of being able to hold regular worship services, the Parish has been blessed with a number of younger people from other parts of the Valley who have found our Parish an oasis and a home. I thank Zach Cooper for his zeal and commitment and apostolic witness!

The Christ Church Connections weekly email contact letter was expanded in the early summer to include an audio file of Matins and Ante-Communion along with the Sunday homily. Produced on Saturdays, it went out Saturday evening in time for Sunday

morning. Beginning in September, it also included the write-up of the weekly homilies at King's-Edgehill and any week-day sermons. Later the format shifted to an audio file of the 8am service of Holy Communion which is sent out between 9 and 9:15am each Sunday. Thus, the Parish has endeavoured to maintain its mission and to maintain contact within and beyond the Parish.

Under COVID-19, pastoral and priestly ministries are a special challenge but, once again, we have found ways to work things out with nursing homes and hospitals throughout the ups and downs of the ever-changing dictates of public policy. With respect to the sacraments, the policies we have put in place seem to have been well-received and appreciated, whether it is communion in one kind, or in both kinds through intinction by the Priest.

Christ Church is a great barn of a place so social distancing is not a problem. We were even able to host the Encaenia Service for King's-Edgehill in the late summer and we have been able to work out acceptable arrangements for funerals, particularly the funerals of Aggie Langille and Moira Burgess, two stalwarts of the Parish whose dedication and service were outstanding. We are most grateful to God for their witness and service over many, many years in and through many challenges. Such things are really all about the idea of clarifying who you are through your response to when you lived.

We do not have control over the larger events that belong to our world and day but the 'gesima' Gospels remind us of the activities of our souls, the exercise of the virtues that belong to our freedom and dignity. Even more, the 'gesima' Sundays show us the transformation of those forms of human excellence into the forms of love which belong to our end with God.

We have continued with our practice of closing the Church down for the winter months and retiring to the Hall as our 'winter chapel'. That has resulted in considerable savings with respect to electricity costs while still preserving the interior fabric of the Church. Financially, because of COVID-19, a number of projects were put on hold with the result of reduced expenditures though at the same time committed givings, *mirabile dictu*, actually increased! This is an encouraging sign of support and commitment to the continuing life of the Parish. It remains to be seen how things unfold in the months and year (or years!) ahead but our hope is to be able to press on with a number of necessary projects such as replacing the sills of the windows and the plexi-glass protective panels. There are a number of other maintenance matters which invariably arise as well. In the long term, there is the perennial question about the siding.

There has been considerable anxiety in the public health world about singing and indeed stringent restrictions have been the order of the day. Our organist, Owen Stephens, for family and personal reasons, has not been able to play and we have greatly missed him and that aspect of our worship and life. We shall have to be patient on that front. One result has been increasing the forms of oral participation in the liturgy by way of saying both the Introit and Gradual Psalms, a way of inculcating some of the spiritual riches of the older traditions of *lectio divina*, holy reading.

The Psalms are really the song-book or hymn book both of the Jewish synagogues and of Christian churches. It has been good for us to attend to things which otherwise often get overlooked. My hope and prayer is that these developments have helped in the deepening of faith and understanding. With the relaxing of some of the restrictions about singing, we have been able to sing *a cappella* a couple of hymns, recognizing the formative nature of the hymnody of the Church. This has worked particularly well in the environs of the Hall.

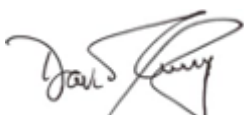
The year has meant a number of changes in terms of operation. I am grateful to Blythe Appleby for undertaking the cleaning of the Hall on a weekly basis, to David and Jen Appleby for helping with the cleaning of the Church and to locking up after services, to Scotty and Kathy Cameron for taking care of the compost and garbage details, to Marilyn Curry for looking after the preparations of the altar. My thanks to Alex Jurgens and Rod Kershaw for assisting Kathy with the financials and the counting of the offertory. My thanks to Bronwyn and Blythe for ringing the bell during the times we have been in the Church. All such things are part of our witness and service.

Thanks to Scott Gilbreath, our Parish web-site continues to be alive and active, another aspect of our witness and mission, especially in terms of providing intellectual and spiritual content. It is an important part of our outreach far beyond the immediate boundaries of the Parish.

We were not able to hold the annual Lobster Supper or the annual Ham Supper this year. The Newfoundland and Country Evenings of Musical Entertainment have also been curtailed. The Hall continues to be available for outside groups such as Quick-as-a-Wink theatre this past summer, the Four Seasons Orchestra on Saturday mornings, and various Girl Guide units on certain evenings. All these things have required commitment to the policies of the Department of Health in terms of COVID-19. They are another aspect of our outreach.

In short, we have been alive and active as a Parish. I am most grateful for the support and direction of the Parish Council, for the advice and encouragement of our Parish Solicitor, Trevor Hughes, and for the support of our Honorary Warden, Barbara Hughes, but, above all, to all of you for your steadfastness and determination with respect to our mission and life. It is really all about being “the good ground”, to use the Sexagesima metaphor, which is nothing less than “an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience”, regardless of the times in which we live. That remains our challenge and our joy.

In Christ,

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