

Rector's Annual Report for 2025  
Annual Parish Meeting February 15th, 2026

"Charity endureth all things"

"Charity endureth all things," Paul tells us in a remarkable sequence of *encomia* about charity. 1st Corinthians 13 is his great hymn to love read on *Quinquagesima Sunday* just before the formal beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday; this year on February 18th. The passage highlights the significance of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the greatest of which is charity. It complements the Gospel about "going up to Jerusalem" with Jesus. As the Gospel makes clear that has entirely to do with his Passion, about which we have to learn through the disciplines and journey of Lent. It is not enough just to be told about it: "they understood" after all, "none of these things." There is the constant challenge to work at learning the meaning of what is revealed and made known to us that ultimately has to do with our participation in the disciplines that belong "to the observance of a holy Lent," as the Penitential Service in the Prayer Book puts it. How? "By self-examination and repentance, by prayer, fasting, and self-denial, and by reading and meditation upon God's holy Word." All pretty concise and concrete. Such practices have their counterpart in the spiritual disciplines of other religions and philosophies. They belong to a deeper sense of the spirituality of our humanity.

This year *Quinquagesima Sunday* comes right after Valentine's Day, at once a minor religious observance commemorating a rather obscure Bishop and Martyr around whom swirl a host of legends and stories (see the Intro to the Calendar, BCP, p. ix) and a major commercial secular extravagance, it is fair to say, that somehow conflates chocolate, sex, flowers, and warm fuzzy feelings of being acknowledged and, perhaps, even appreciated but as focused on the erotic and the emotional aspects of human experience. Not exactly a complete account of ourselves or of love.

But it raises the question, 'what is love?' which Paul takes to a whole new level, a spiritual level that has to do with the end and purpose of our humanity as found in God. It is not a denial of the erotic and emotional, the cozy and the comfortable. Rather it places all our commonplace attitudes towards love on a new foundation, the divine love that redeems and elevates all our incomplete human loves. As such, the charity that endures all things is not simply stoicism, a kind of restraint and resilience in hanging on in the storms and tempests of nature and human hearts; keeping a stiff upper lip, and all that. As Paul says, almost as a kind of concluding coda, "charity never fails." It is something ever present and everlasting upon which all things radically depend.

And along with charity goes faith and hope. They are all implied in each other and while charity is "the greatest of these", it doesn't eclipse or negate the other two. What Paul presents belongs to a profound understanding of human character and personality essential to the Christian understanding of what it means to be a person: our knowing even as we are known and loved in God's eternal knowing and loving of all things. Faith speaks to a kind of knowing; hope to a kind of desiring or willing; but charity is what joins or unites both. Charity, as the Collect so concisely puts it, is "that most excellent gift,

the very *bond* of peace and of all virtues." Without charity "all our doings are nothing worth" and without charity "whosoever liveth is counted dead."

Here in a nutshell is the essential feature of Christian faith and witness that belongs to the understanding of our humanity as embodied beings made in the image of God. "For now we see in a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known," as Paul so beautifully and powerfully puts it. The virtues of faith, hope, and charity belong to the perfecting of human character and to human flourishing. Our Lenten programme this year will consider Augustine's treatment of these matters in his work *On Christian Doctrine* and his *Enchiridion*, in part through his Trinitarian understanding of human personality that features so prominently in classical Anglicanism.

It has been a rather momentous year at Christ Church and for me personally. It is encouraging to see some growth in attendance as we have welcomed new people to the Parish, both younger and older, some who come from a considerable distance. There have been a number of adult baptisms and a stirring of interest in learning and in devotion and worship, in commitment and service, as we seek to be faithful to what we have received as an integral part of the "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" in these unsettled and confusing times. The challenge has been to understand what it means to be Christ's Church in and through the churches and the forms of their institutional expression. To speak of the Anglican Church of Canada as a denomination is really to use a sociological and secular descriptive but one that is subordinate to the principles of identity expressed in *The Solemn Declaration of 1893*, printed at the front of the Prayer Book. Those principles are about what has been received and which guide us in the face of the broken nature of the Anglican Communion, the so-called state of 'impaired communion' where there is *no consensus* on a host of controversial matters, only competing opinions.

The Rev'd Dr. Robert Crouse, in his 2002 paper to Regent College, *The Essence of Anglicanism*, offers a cogent *theological* understanding of the *consensus fidelium*, the common mind of the Church on Faith over the centuries. It challenges sociological and political ways of thinking that compete for dominance and which run the risk of supplanting theology. "The Anglican Communion, the fellowship of Anglican Churches throughout the world, exists," he observes "by virtue of a voluntary allegiance to a common tradition of Christian faith and worship," expressed in the Common Prayer tradition. There is no racial unity, no linguistic unity, and not any organizational unity in terms of bureaucratic structures such as Dioceses, Synods, even including the see of Canterbury. "No Primate, no Conference, no Council has any legislative authority over the Anglican Communion." That global Anglican world, it is worth noting, is predominantly non-white, non-English, and not elderly.

Something else underlies those aspects of human and institutional life. It is something theological as grounded in the images of Revelation, namely as he puts it, "the Scriptures as the Word of God written which is the fundament; the ancient ecumenical Creeds and Councils; the ministry and Apostolic succession; and the divinely ordained sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Supper of the Lord." The Scriptures, the Creeds, the Apostolic

Ministry, and the Sacraments constitute the substance of the Anglican way of being Christian. "Faithfulness to a common tradition of Christian faith and worship ... and that alone, constitutes the definition of Anglicanism."

It is largely concentrated in the classical books of Common Prayer, "and that tradition is its principle of cohesion" which if it falters leads to fragmentation and disintegration. It is a strong statement of ecclesial identity that challenges the competing claims of identity in our current culture and in our churches. The *consensus fidelium* concerns our faithfulness to what we have received, not to what we invent and define or attempt to legislate whether individually or institutionally. The *consensus fidelium* is "the common mind of the faithful in relation to the Word of God revealed" (Crouse) and that is something which we have to constantly work at appropriating and understanding, literally and spiritually being "transformed by the renewal of our minds" about what we have by grace received.

For Anglicans, the Book of Common Prayer is the Anglican *magisterium* or teaching authority to which all are subject - Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, laity, synods and councils, parishes, and for that matter, alternative liturgies. This pattern of teaching recalls us to who we are as "an integral portion of the One Body of Christ" (*Solemn Declaration*) even in the face of fragmentation and disintegration that is part of the fallible character of our churches.

There are the challenges that belong to the "care of all the churches" as the Epistle reading for *Sexagesima* reminds us. Yet I think there is a healthy and happy spirit of co-operation in our parish in matters pertaining to its operation. We have continued with prudence in managing our practical affairs without sacrifice to the primacy of worship. In the months of January, February and March, we make the Parish Hall our winter retreat only to return to 'Big Church' in time for Holy Week and Easter. This has been, I think, not only a prudential matter in terms of heating and costs, but a spiritual benefit in terms of a greater degree of intimacy in worship.

We have worked at establishing protocols for the regular cleaning and maintenance of the Church and Hall, thanks to the labours of Scotty Cameron and his daughter Nickie, and with the help of others, of everyone really. Our annual Fall 'church cleaning day' went splendidly. We have been blessed with a great array of talents and abilities with respect to a number of practical concerns. Marion Mullins has done an exceptional job as Treasurer at keeping the finances in order and in cleaning up the Coronation Room as well as monitoring with an eagle eye the uncertainties about electrical bills owing to the data breach at NS Power. Dana Mullins is a handyman *par excellence* who has helped with the tasks of meeting the requirements of the Fire Marshall and Health and Safety concerns; not to mention undertaking a project to replace the lights high up in the Church! The protocols are now posted in the Parish and the fire extinguishers, etc., are up to code.

We have been in contact with the local Health and Food Safety Inspector and received approval for our practices surrounding events such as our annual Ham supper and other occasional events. My heartfelt thanks to all who helped out with the Ham Supper in November: a lot of work, to be sure, but a lot of fun and good fellowship. Thanks to

Bronwyn Appleby *et familia et alia*, we have maintained a 'last Sunday of the month time of fellowship and refreshment' following the 10:30am service which has been most welcome. All of these matters have been undertaken through the oversight of the Parish Council whose labours and commitment to the temporalities and good management of the Parish are second to none, especially in remaining vigilant and committed to the Parish as a Corporation responsible for the movable assets and operations of the Parish.

The recent decisions of the Diocesan Synod with respect to changes to the Canon regarding Parish Governance are a serious concern because those changes call into question the corporate integrity of the Parish and the role of the Rector, Wardens and Parish Council about the legal and property affairs of the Parish. For that reason, and quite apart from a number of practical concerns, the Parish Council has decided to take these matters under advisement with our solicitor. This is indicated as an information item in the agenda of the meeting.

We have been blessed with the generosity of the parishioners whose envelope contributions have increased and helped with the funding of Parish operations. We have not drawn quite as much upon the Christ Church Foundation, though of course there are a number of projects and always emergency contingencies that arise. We were able to contribute \$ 2,000.00 to the Diocese as well as providing gift cards for those in need at times.

We have maintained our spiritual and teaching programmes for Lent and Advent as well as the Christ Church Book Club. In the Fall, we hosted two Quiet Days focused on the themes of classical Anglicanism and the *consensus fidelium* theologically considered under the auspices of the Works of Robert Crouse enterprise. They were very well attended and much appreciated. My thanks to all who helped out with the arrangements. Out of them has come a discussion group that seeks to explore the questions that revolve around the *consensus fidelium*. Classical Anglican divinity is explicit about the essentials of the faith to which nothing can be added or taken away while recognizing the place of theological reflection upon those principles.

It was especially a momentous year for the Parish musically. We have been greatly blessed with Owen Stephens as organist for twenty years. His knowledge of the classical organ repertoire has contributed to wonderful preludes and postludes that have complemented and enhanced the liturgy. His dedication to the services, to the choir, and to the Parish has been outstanding and much appreciated. He retired at the end of the summer. On Sunday, September 7th, 2025, following the sung Eucharist, the Parish hosted a reception honouring and thanking Owen for his dedication and commitment. He spoke eloquently of his time as organist of Christ Church.

We have been greatly blessed as well with our new organist, Michael Gnemmi, an extremely talented young organist with a passion for the classical traditions of liturgical music and who, like Owen, is well-versed in the musical literature that accompanies the liturgy. He is a pleasure to work with and a great asset to our Parish. The transition was seamless; he picked up where Owen left off. The contributions of both Owen and Michael

are outstanding. Owen was able to return to the organ for two Sundays in December when Michael was away and he played on Christmas Morning.

The choir is to be commended on its faithfulness and commitment to the ministry of music. I had forgotten that owing to the 'Covid' years and the physical demands on Owen, I had produced a somewhat truncated version of the Christmas Pageant of Nine Lessons and Carols which usually marks the last service of the calendar year before we move to the Hall. It meant not as many Christmas carols were sung. Bronwyn and Blythe reminded me, nay *beseached me* to return to the fuller service which we did this year on December 28th, the Feast of the Holy Innocents. It was wonderful and, of course, provided ample opportunity for organ, choir, and congregation to sing the mystery of the Incarnation in all the richness and fullness of the carols of the season. My thanks to them and to Judy Gilbreath, Marilyn Curry, Jacoba Morash, and Scotty Cameron for their musical services, Sunday after Sunday.

It was lovely to be the host venue for another concert under the auspices of *Musique Royale* in December with an instrumental programme of Christmas music from the medieval to the Baroque period. Harp, violin, bouzouki, and flute resounded beautifully with the wood of the interior of Christ Church. All part of the witness and outreach of the Parish.

Funerals frequently happen in some fashion or other at funeral homes these days but this spring and summer there were several funerals held at Christ Church. One was the funeral of Sir Graham Day, the last knight in Canada, as he said about himself, and who was quite adamant about who was to officiate and about where his funeral was to be held. Having funerals in the church proper reminds us, I think, of the embodied nature of our faith and worship that gathers us together to God in the House of God. "This is none other but the House of God; this is the gate of heaven" are words from Genesis inscribed on the interior walls of the Church. We are embraced from cradle to grave architecturally speaking by the *Alpha* and *Omega* beams of the Church, symbolic of Christ as the beginning and end of our lives in faith. The holy places *matter* and thus maintenance is also mission, something to which the Parish is strongly committed. This is all part and parcel of "the care of the churches," and the meaning of their being.

My thanks to Jen and David Appleby for organizing *The Missions to Seafarers* programme and to all of you who contributed so generously to this outreach. More than thirty boxes were packed up and delivered before Christmas. This is, I think, the most ever that we have been able to contribute.

It has been wonderful to have Fr. Todd Meaker as priest-assistant at the altar for the 8am services and I hope that he will be able to continue to participate in the liturgies. We have been blessed over the years to have had an arrangement with Fr. Tom Henderson of the neighbouring (and surrounding) churches of Avon Valley and Hantsport whereby we cover for one another during summer vacations. Fr. Tom will be retiring this summer as of August 1st, 2026. I have greatly appreciated his ministry and his willingness to take services at Christ Church when I have been away. My hope and prayer is that Fr. Todd will be able to step into that role.

There are a lot of moving parts to the life of a Parish, not the least in terms of worship. My thanks to Judy Gilbreath and Marilyn Curry for their expertise and dedication to preparing the altar and seeing to the care of the linens, to Jen Appleby in preparing the Advent wreath, and to all who helped in the move from the Church to the Hall at the end of December.

I would be remiss not to thank our wardens, Alex Jurgens and David Appleby, for their guidance and advice on a host of matters, our secretary Judy Gilbreath, our honorary warden, Scott Gilbreath who also runs our active website, council member Scotty Cameron, honorary treasurer Rod Kershaw, and Marion Mullins, our treasurer, and to the direction and advice of Trevor Hughes, our Parish Solicitor; all of whose dedication to the Corporation of the Parish of Christ Church is simply outstanding.

The year past was momentous for me personally. After twenty-seven years as Chaplain and twenty-five years as full time teacher at King's-Edgehill School mostly in the International Baccalaureate programme in English and Theory of Knowledge but also other subjects such as Rhetoric, History, and World Religions, I retired this past June. The whole experience has been a blessing in many ways especially in terms of vocation as priest and teacher and I have learned a lot from the experience and in turn have contributed a lot, and, to be honest, endured a lot of things. It has been "a full and fulfilling ministry" as one bishop who went on to become Primate of the Canadian Church put it.

I am grateful for the support of the Parish in that ministry over those many years and regard it all as part of the outreach of the priestly and pastoral ministry. It is hard to express the range and scope of it all but preaching often four mornings a week and writing for years upon years a weekly Chapel reflection while teaching five courses and being involved in many other aspects of the School both in terms of speaking and writing and in sports and other things has been quite rewarding. I have enjoyed the challenge of teaching and the morning chapel services. I appreciate the opportunity to think about things philosophically and in literary modes in relation to the Scriptures and things theologically.

While the therapeutic culture is dominant in our institutions, it nonetheless draws upon many things that are grounded in the Christian understanding. Chapel was in some sense counterculture, both complementing and challenging the various *issues du jour* and ideologies of our times. For me, it was a way of thinking more deeply about the relation between other disciplines and ways of knowing with what belongs to our theological and religious traditions and not just Christian ones. Chapel was about honouring everyone as persons regardless and not because of their various identity claims whether ethnic, linguistic, religious, non-religious or otherwise. It was simply about a commitment to learning, to the idea of sharing knowledge. It was never about telling students what they had to believe and say but simply showing them something of the wisdom of the ages and the sages that are there for them to consider and wrestle with and in one way or another make them their own. It was education not indoctrination.

The privilege for me, and the only privilege, is education and the idea of encouraging respect for learning. I would like to think that has carried over into the life of the Parish as well. Since I would be turning seventy in September 2025, I thought that it was time to leave the School. I have to admit that it is quite a transition and I am still adjusting to new and different patterns and routines.

It means a few changes for the Parish as well. As of December 1st, 2026, the year I will turn seventy-one, I am obligated to begin receiving funds from the Church Pension Plan of the Anglican Church of Canada. This is something along with health care and other things to which the Parish has been contributing along with my stipend. I am fully aware that the stipend and other charges involved in maintaining a priest and rector are often the largest draws upon Parish funds. This should ease that concern somewhat but I plan and would like to continue on as priest and rector of Christ Church. In other words, I am not retiring from active ministry at Christ Church, assuming, of course, that this, too, has the support of the Parish.

It has been a momentous year intellectually and academically for me. I preached at the King's College Chapel in March, 2025 on the Commemoration of Thomas Aquinas and of Perpetua and her Companions. Having contributed two papers in years past to the Pusey House Conference Reports, I was honoured and privileged to go to the Oxford in July and give a paper at this year's conference, a paper on the Thomistic aspects of classical Anglican theology by way of the poetry of George Herbert and Thomas Traherne and the some sermons by Lancelot Andrewes. Marilyn and I had a lovely time in Oxford and were quite encouraged by the number of young people from a range of backgrounds but with an interest in orthodox Christian thinking. From Oxford we went to Wales and did some hiking there. I don't think I have ever seen so many sheep! It was a lovely trip for both of us.

Permit me to tell a personal story. There were some touching moments with the last classes with 'the Rev' (as I am known) at KES. One was about the Grade Eleven English class. I got to the class a few minutes late because of the last Junior School chapel service. The students presented me first with a tray of donuts and a gift bag and card. Lovely but they were particularly keen on having me open the gift bag. It was a six pack of beer! Now you have to love it when a class (mostly though not all of a lively group of guys) think they can give the Rev a six-pack of beer! (I didn't ask for the details of how they got it though that came out later from one of their mothers). But the card revealed their motivation.

Several had written their thanks to me with the phrase, "Have a brewski with the boys!" Ah ha. Earlier in the year, we were reading *Oedipus Rex*. I was explaining the story behind Sophocles' play about how Oedipus ended up leaving Corinth and going to Thebes. The whole thing turns on Oedipus thinking he knows who he is but doesn't. He thought he was the son of Polybus and Merope, the King and Queen of Corinth. But one day in Corinth, "out with the boys having a brewski in the taverna," as I put it, someone called him a bastard which launches Oedipus into questioning who he is and thus going to the Delphic Oracle. Long story short, the class never forgot that line - "having a brewski with

the boys". Which is, I suppose, key to whatever they might remember about that great classic of Greek tragedy! Hilarious.

While we were travelling in England and Wales, Marilyn and I went up to Chester, a lovely city in England near the Welsh border. Lo, and behold, didn't we find there in Chester a restaurant named "Brewski" (an American chain). So we went in and had a meal and a brewski and sent a picture to my former students. You just never know what will stay with students about what is read and studied!

In August, just before the Long Lake fires, I gave two talks on the poetry of Herbert and Traherne at St. Anne's Camp, West Dalhousie. In September, I went to the SSC synod in Dunwoody, a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, where I gave two short talks on classical Anglicanism and Chalcedonian Sacramentalism. All very encouraging as this group of priests, many of them young and from all over the Anglican diaspora of our fragmented communion, were interested in things belonging to our classical heritage. Later in the Fall, I presented a talk at the first Quiet Day on Bramhall, Andrewes, and the concept of essential faith in classical Anglicanism. In December at Evensong for the Third Sunday in Advent, I preached at St. George's, Halifax on the advent theme of 'Hell'. All some of the moments of this momentous year. Charity endureth all things, and wonderfully so.

In Christ,

Fr. David Curry