

Priest-in-charge's Report to Parish Council

Anglican Church of the Incarnation, Oakville – April 10, 2011

There are times when parish ministry has the feel of an old bumper-sticker. “Jesus is coming. Look busy.” We have looked busy as a parish since the last Parish Council met in January. Happily, much of the time that appearance has even reflected a productive reality.

As an apostolic community sent on God's mission, we signed our Ministry Covenant (January 19) between Bishop, priest and people, and together we celebrated the new beginning it effected in a moving (snowstorm-delayed) commissioning service led by Bishop Michael (February 8). Members of our EcoJustice Committee have begun earnest, if preliminary conversations about a kind of “community kitchen” initiative in potential partnership with ArtHouse and Kids Cook at School. I have been meeting with my colleague, the Rev'd Cheryl Fricker, Rector of St. Aidan's, periodically, to explore ways in which we can cooperate and coordinate our ministries in our two parishes. [It was through her that we were introduced to Don Pangman of ArtHouse.]

As a worshipping community, we continued and concluded our Marks of Mission focus in both Sunday worship services and an adult faith nurture series; celebrated, in our distinctive way, Mardi Gras/Transfiguration (March 6); took part in a beautiful joint Ash Wednesday liturgy at St. Aidan's (March 9); undertook to observe a holy Lent, starting with a rather chaotic “Messy Church” all-ages service focussing us on our Lenten theme, Gifts of Jesus (March 13) *[I was very happy that we managed to keep all-ages together in an engaging and creative time of worship. However, I learned a few things about what might work better when Messy Church is the format for a Sunday morning service. It normally is offered at times other than the main service of worship.]*; and have since opened gifts of fasting, self-examination (& labyrinth-walking), reading the scriptures and prayer & meditation. At a meeting of the Altar Prep and Décor group, priorities for future acquisitions were identified. Thanks to Mac Morrison's labours on refinishing, we will soon have the new offering plate and gospel book (given in memory of Paul Maclauchlan) and the new-to-us offering basin (given by the parish of St. Aidan's) for use in our worship services.

As stewards of our resources for ministry, we met with diocesan leaders to clarify our mutual understandings of the financial obligations of parish and diocese to one another (February 18). We revised our financial statements and budget proposal in light of those discussions in time for our annual Vestry meeting (February 20). Thank you again, Vanessa! We were glad to receive word recently from Archdeacon Michael Patterson, Executive Archdeacon of the diocese, that the diocese is confirming its \$20,000 matching grant to the Church of the Incarnation! It is being proposed that our historic debt to the diocese be reduced by that amount, obviating the need for there to be a transfer of money. We are clarifying and working to implement a policy for memorial donations. The Corporation is convening a Storage Working Group to review our storage capacity and needs, develop and implement a coordinated plan for better stewardship of our building and its contents. From time to time, when I need a break from the things that are actually

on my job description, I have taken to: moving furniture in the Music Room, reorganizing some of our large item storage, creating a chapel space in the main worship area, and straightening up the sound system cables. The Stewardship Committee, as you will see from its comprehensive report and our special focus on stewardship goals in our Ministry Covenant at this meeting of Parish Council, has been very faithful and fruitful in its labours on our behalf. As part of the work in this area, we have launched a challenging financial campaign (March 27) led by the extraordinary example of one parishioner's generosity in Paving the Road Ahead so that obstacles (in our historic debt to the diocese and a parking lot in need of repair) to our future in ministry can be removed by the gifts of many.

As a faith community engaged in baptismal ministry together, we welcomed Charlene Pauls to her role as Music Director, removing the "Interim" in front of her title (January 16); we commissioned our incoming Parish Council to their ministries (March 13); and, especially through Julia Lockhart's foundational ground-work and Anne Moniuk's work implementing it, we have pursued with renewed vigour and thoroughness the diocesan policies with respect to volunteer management and screening.

As a caring community, we have been delighted to welcome three new families to our congregation: the Rocheforts (at 8:30 a.m. service); the Thatchers and the O'Connor-Spencers (at 10 a.m. service). I was delighted to learn as we prepare for the baptism of Tessa Spencer at the Easter vigil, that we have a parish baptismal sponsor (in Peter Heys). We welcomed back our Marikia Lukasova, our Nursery Care provider, from her maternity leave and thanked our Interim Nursery Care providers: Elyas and Fatemeh Makhmalbaf. We have noted with sadness the death of Jackie Heroux. I appreciate (and I know from my visits with her, as did Jackie) the care she received in her last months of life from a caring parishioner. I met with Pearl Moffat and Graham Hughes to explore some possibilities for caring community initiatives. We have started to use our newly revised parish list, with a more accurate sense of who are parishioners and who are friends of the parish. I extended a formal written invitation to all parishioners on our new parish list to take part in our Lenten worship offerings and repeated my desire to assist parishioners in deepening their belonging to and connection with their parish. I have been able to make a few more pastoral contacts, touching base with active and dormant parishioners in various kinds of need. Since Council last met, this has included pastoral visits in my office (at least 5); homes (at least 10); and hospitals (at least 8).

As a community which nurtures faith, I appreciate the work of our new Children's Church Coordinator, Brenda Butler and the team she is gathering around her. Brenda and I have consulted about the need for a new curriculum and have decided on *Akaloo* (from the Greek word "to follow"), a comprehensive internet-based curriculum which will be of use to us for wide range of ages. I enjoyed the adult Marks of Mission series we offered on Monday mornings and was pleased with the templates we made available for that series and for at home use. The Youth Group picked up on a suggestion made in the Marks of Mission bookmarks and watched Pay It Forward and discussed it as an example of loving service.

Daring to encroach on the territory of others by including all this in my report to Council, I have brought all this activity together to let you know what we have been doing (and what I have been involved with in recent weeks). My intent to work each Sunday and every other week for the church has been better observed since Vestry. I have, as a result, been able to live more within the 60% limits of my position and reduced accumulated overtime to less than 50 hours. The limitation of this part-time status is obvious to me when I find myself having to choose between pastoral visits and adult faith nurture and also when I am aware of the amount of time which worship planning involves here at Incarnation. I was able to make participation in a clergy spiritual retreat a priority late in February and found it spiritually refreshing and renewing.

A concern was expressed at the last Parish Council meeting that we not put our Ministry Covenant on a shelf, but that we engage it actively in the coming months. I have proposed to Deanna Lusby, our Parish Council Chair that we use each meeting of Parish Council this year to focus upon a different goal (and its attendant objectives and strategies) from our Ministry Covenant. This month, it is stewardship. Following up from each meeting of Parish Council, I am further suggesting that we issue a parish-wide newsletter which keeps the parish informed and engaged with our Covenant and with the work of Council and Corporation. I have even thought about giving it a name (stolen from a CBC radio programme), *Dispatches*, since the focus would be on reports from the fields of our mission and ministry. I look forward to discussing how we could move on this proposal at our meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev'd Canon R. Terry DeForest
Priest-in-charge