

Priest-in-charge's Report to Parish Council

Anglican Church of the Incarnation, Oakville – June 12, 2011

Comprehensive communication

Touching on our goals of comprehensive communication and promoting a generous culture of stewardship, a new newsletter for the Church of the Incarnation is emerging – *Incarnation Acts!* Its focus is on the parish and its members engaged in God's mission. For the foreseeable future, each issue will have a theme borrowed from our Ministry Covenant. I expect that the first issue will be "published" on-line and in hard-copy in the next few days. I also hope that we will have made it possible for the newsletter to have interactive features. Its theme will be stewardship. Thanks to Pearl Moffat, Jeff Bowden & Julia Lockhart for their guidance and assistance in getting it started.

Generous culture of stewardship

Speaking of generosity, we are receiving wonderfully generous responses, in gifts and pledges, to the Paving the Road Ahead campaign. On behalf of the entire parish, I am in the midst of expressing thanks to all our pledgers and donors. In rough terms, as of May 31st, we had received \$25,000 in donations and pledges! At our Special Vestry meeting on May 15th we authorized the borrowing of the assets in the newly-named "Debt Reduction Fund" (formerly the Building Fund) for the major property renewal project of paving the parking lot. All together (with the campaign proceeds, a portion of a major gift made earlier this year, and this authorization) we are only a few thousand away from having the money to undertake the paving project this year. What an extraordinary witness to the generosity of our members and their support for presenting a more welcoming face to the wider community through our physical facilities!

Our building and property are ministry resources. We, therefore, have a spiritual responsibility for their stewardship. On numerous occasions in the last few months, I found myself or others tripping over various storage problems. As noted at our last Council meeting, the Corporation has convened a Storage Task Force, under the leadership of Beth Hanna-Morrison, and asked it to review our storage capacity & needs and make recommendations for making the most of what we have. That Task Force is seeking feedback from Council and others concerning a proposal to re-purpose our use of the A/V room and chair storage room (cf. the Wardens' Report). I look forward to our discussion of that idea so that the Task Force can decide how next to proceed in its work.

Remembering that we are stewards of our time and talent as well as treasure, we are holding our Volunteer Appreciation Sunday on the Day of Pentecost – June 12th. Presentations of the symbols of fire, wind and seeds, alongside the testimonies about some "behind the scenes" ministries will enrich our worship that day.

Life-changing worship

We have been engaged in common worship which has been carefully planned and conducted so as to strengthen and deepen our spiritual lives. The June meeting of Parish Council is focussed on our goal of "life-changing worship." That focus will be incarnated by undertaking a thorough review of the parish's worship life from September

2010 to today. Council members (and, later, if possible, parishioners at large) are being asked to use the **A Year in the Life of...** worship survey. I have asked that it be distributed a week ahead of our Council meeting so that we can all look back at how we have worshipped together and give some thought to the ways in which our shared worship has “hit” or “missed the mark” of nurturing our faith journeys and of remaining true to the principles by which we have been trying to travel on those journeys.

Since April 10, we have experienced the greatest Christian festival – Easter – with the attendant Holy Week lead up to that day and season of deep joy. The grid in the survey may prompt us to recall some of the remarkable moments and highlights of Holy Week & Easter, and, indeed, the entire year since last fall. A list of the principles by which we have been guided appears at the beginning of the survey. I found it very instructive to have these principles articulated all in one place.

Please take time this week to print out and complete your survey, bringing it with you to the Council meeting. If you need more space, please attach additional sheets. Receiving your reflections will help me and our Worship Planning, Altar Prep & Décor, and Music Selection groups immeasurably. Many thanks for the diligence and assistance I received from those groups in putting together the survey. At our upcoming Council meeting, we will also be inviting suggestions and ideas for the coming year in worship.

Prophetic social justice-making

I recently met with Ron Shantz of North Oakville Outreach. Ron has worked in this town for many years as a social service provider and community development animator. He told me of work that he has been doing helping build relationships between faith communities (and other community organizations) and residents of Halton Community Housing. Our EcoJustice Committee has expressed interest in this initiative and will meet with Ron early in September to explore the idea. They are also exploring a promising community garden possibility!

Our proposed partnership with ArtHouse and Kids Cook at School in the *Junior Chefs Ethnic Cooking* pilot programme which will offer “lifetime cooking skills, healthy eating and food awareness to [20 children aged 7-11] while they explore cultural cuisines from around the world” is taking shape. The programme is being planned for Thursdays after school from September 22 through November 10 inclusive. Four volunteers from the church are needed to help make this happen.

Along with a few parishioners, I took part in the first Interfaith Council of Halton Food drive stocking the shelves of the Fareshare food bank with 350 bags of groceries. Together we welcomed the Rev'd Canon Wendy Roy, Executive Director of St. Matthew's House in Hamilton, as our guest preacher at the 10 a.m. service on May 29th. Wendy's presentation opened our eyes to the wide range of services that Anglicans are offering through this vital social service agency with an impact on some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country. It also became clear that the need is growing each year. Our charitable responses to that growing need locally and globally are vital; so are

advocacy and community development responses as we strive to co-operate with God in bringing in the reign of justice, peace and healing.

We have been thus reminded of the urgent needs for financial and material support to those in need in Oakville's or Hamilton's neighbourhoods, those suffering from floods and fires across the country, or those suffering from natural disasters around the globe. Envelopes for making such gifts to St. Matthew's House or through the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund can be found on our Greeters' Table or in the office.

Caring community/pastoral care

I can let you know that this aspect of our life together claims my prayer, concern and some of my time. I am aware that it often feels to me as though this ministry (alongside faith nurture for adults) suffers the most from my being here part-time. Nevertheless, since April 10, I am aware of at least three hospital visits; four pastoral office visits; and four pastoral home visits (including two more visits with new parishioners). [I also conducted a memorial service for a woman I knew twenty years ago.]

A hearty welcome to newcomers Shona & Terry Rochefort (@ 8:30 a.m. services) and to the Cummings-Thatcher household - Joshua, Meghan & Mya (@ 10)! The parish continues to extend practical caring with Casseroles for Crazy Days and newcomer welcome packages. I delight in knowing that I can simply refer such requests to Kathy Howse and her teams and they are looked after in a timely and caring manner.

On May 29th, I was deeply glad that we could welcome many members of the Oakville Curling Club and friends and family of the Maclauchlans to our 10 a.m. service. The Curling Club had generously made a memorial donation which made it possible for us to obtain and dedicate, to the memory of Paul Maclauchlan, two items for the enhancement of our worship: a gospel book and offertory bowl. As discussed at Council in April, we are proceeding with plans to establish a memorial gifts book to be placed on the gifts table in our worship space. I am in need of the assistance of someone who will be willing to go through our parish records so that we can register previous memorial gifts in keeping with our emerging policy.

Outstanding leadership in ministry

At the beginning of Corporation meetings, I often pray that we may be blessed by gifts of administration with a passage from the Letter to the Ephesians echoing in my head: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ" [4:12]. It may not seem like it often, but the work we do through meetings, minutes, reports, motions, *etc.*, can be of profound spiritual significance when administration serves mission. Some of it may be bureaucratic busy-ness, but I am aware that when I share in the councils of the church, many opportunities are provided to recall us to our vocation as God's servants. Over and above the countless e-mails, several phone calls and occasional letters, I can gladly [?] report that I met in person with my lay and clergy partners in ministry at: a special parish Vestry, Corporation (X2, + a transition dinner), Worship Planning, Stewardship (X2), EcoJustice, Storage Task Force, Glen Abbey Child-care Centre (X2), Volunteer Coordinator, Building & Property Chair, the diocesan

Interim Ministers, the Rector of St. Aidan's (X2), the Regional Archdeacon, and the Bishop of Niagara in the past nine weeks. This commitment to coordinating and communicating with others is essential to vital ministries and the healthy maintenance of our ministry partnerships. While I don't think that it is desirable for us to multiply church meetings or the length of them *ad infinitum*, I do want to exercise diligence, care, transparency, confidentiality and intentionality in the administration of our common work. I deeply appreciate the skills for such things which I find in so many of my ministry partners and hope that I can model similar accountability and responsibility.

I also attended:

- the annual Maundy Thursday Cathedral service of renewal of ordination vows renewing my own sense of vocation, and,
- the annual Clergy and Licensed Lay-workers Conference, building collegiality and continuing professional development amongst other diocesan leaders.

Because of my part-time (60%) status, I have, reluctantly, not made myself available for meetings with the Trafalgar Regional Clericus (monthly meeting of local Anglican clergy) or the Interfaith Council of Halton. I am aware that there is a resultant loss of our ability to share in ministry and would like to minimize my and our parish's isolation from these wider contexts at some time in the future.

However, it has been good to be reminded that my lay partners in ministry take up their calling to share in the councils of the church as well. I was delighted to appoint Vanessa Rago as our parish's Delegate to Youth Synod (held on the first weekend of May at St. George's, St. Catharines). I was furthermore grateful that Winkie Macdougall and Lois Maclauchlan attended the Back to Church Sunday Workshop on our behalf. In our contacts with other parishes in the diocese, we have also been made aware of the rare strength our parish has in having such an active, standing Stewardship Committee.

I have been attentive to my accumulated overtime (which is more than 40 hours to date) and am seeking to be responsible to the parish and myself by striving to reduce that total. The summer months may provide me with a bit more leeway to eliminate that backlog. While I am disheartened by my lack of progress on thesis writing (despite my "week on/week off" church work pattern), I have been able to take a week's vacation alongside all the busyness of Holy Week & Easter and those numerous meetings noted above.

One way in which we have been exercising outstanding leadership in ministry, is by entering into the first Ministry Covenant signed in this diocese. That Covenant is frequently on my mind and it is providing a great blue-print for our work together. We are coming up on the time for our six month review of that Covenant and so our Parochial Committee (Wardens, Deputy Wardens, the parish's Lay, Youth and Alternate Lay Delegates to Synod) will meet with Archdeacon Stephen Hopkins and me later this month to "check in" as to how we are all doing with our covenanted goals and strategies.

Continuous culture of innovation

In my experience here, the place where much of our innovation as a parish has been channelled is our worship: the flexible use of a strikingly adaptable space, the creative

decoration of it, and the breadth of liturgical resources: symbols, activities, words, music, drama, *et cetera* which (ironically) form our tradition here.

Where we are breaking some new ground at this time is in tentatively reaching out to establish a relationship with a neighbouring Anglican parish, St. Aidan's, (along with the contacts referred to above with North Oakville Outreach, Interfaith Council of Halton, ArtHouse, Kid's Cook at School) to identify ways in which we can share in ministry with others. In the mid-twentieth century, the World Council of Churches articulated the Lund Principle – it is only when deeply held convictions force us to act separately that we should do so. In other words, the default assumption is that Christians should **act together** in God's service. This is a lesson that we have sometimes learned, for instance in the ecumenical social justice coalitions of KAIROS or Project Ploughshares or even in inter-faith bodies like Ontario's Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition. The decade-old full communion relationship between Anglicans & Episcopalians and the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Canada and the USA has borne fruit in a number of ways, including the invitation that Lutheran clergy extended to me and my Anglican colleagues to join the Lutheran clergy in their annual spiritual retreat in Niagara Falls in February.

However, it is not often a reality encountered on the ground locally. We have engaged in ministry in competing silos of splendid isolation, even and, sometimes, especially amongst churches of the same denomination! The joint services with St. Aidan's on Ash Wednesday and the Great Vigil of Easter, their gift to us of an offering basin, the invitation to their Lenten study series, and the preaching exchange (unfortunately postponed from June 26th to the fall) are all small tokens of our Ministry Covenant's commitment to "serve collaboratively" with "outside the lines innovation."

What's ahead?

Our outstanding leadership and culture of innovation goals will be given considerable attention this fall as we prepare for and hold a special Visioning Day on October 15. A planning group will be convened shortly to work with Christyn Perkons, our process facilitator. Ideas are taking shape in my head about how we can use the day to engage questions about **why** we are here at the corner of Dorval Drive and Old Abbey Lane and **how** we see the future of ministry shaping up at the Church of the Incarnation. Before the planning group meets, it would be rather premature to pre-empt its work, but to give some advance notice, it may be that our preparations for that workshop will include a series of Sundays exploring the purpose of the church and a number of gatherings in parishioners' homes. As to whether or not those plans are embraced and how they evolve, stay alert for future announcements.

Upcoming soon: Trinity Sunday, June 19th, our next all-ages service and a youth-hosted Father's Day barbecue! Oh, and my summer vacation (July 24 through August 18) during which the Rev'd Canon Marni Nancekivell will conduct worship services and provide emergency pastoral care support.

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