



The St. James'

Parishioner

March 2010

St. James' Anglican Church 6 Hamilton Street Stratford N5A 7P4 www.stjamesstratford.ca

From the Rector's Desk...

The Prodigal Son: A Lenten Meditation

It seems that in so many of us, there's a part of us that wants to believe that people get what they deserve. Have you ever noticed that? Have you noticed that in yourself? When a person you dislike gets in trouble, have you ever heard yourself saying: "Aha! They're getting what they deserve." Or when someone you really like has something nice happen, have you heard yourself saying; "Gee I'm glad she won that - she really deserved it." In the stories that people write, in books, on TV, or in the Movies, we find it really satisfying when people get what we think they deserve.

But of course, in real life, we know that that doesn't always seem to happen. We all know of stories where people don't get what we think they deserve. We know of wonderful people who get hurt. And we know of nasty people who never seem to get punished. It doesn't seem right does it? ... What do you think? Do people in the end get what they deserve?

Back in Jesus' time I think people felt pretty much the same way we do. They had a strong sense that people should get what they deserve. And any God that's worth anything would give people what they deserve.

That's why Jesus' parable of the prodigal son would have been so shocking. This parable that we hear on the fourth Sunday of Lent this year is a story about two brothers who don't appear to get what they deserve.

We all know the parable well. A father has two sons. The young son takes his share of the inheritance, leaves home, squanders it on loose living and then finds himself hungry. The older brother stays at home and works with the father. When the young son comes home and asks for forgiveness the father is so happy that he brings him rings, sandals, robes and throws a celebration feast. Meanwhile, the older brother, working out in the field has never been given any of these things, and becomes upset.

I'm sure that the people who first heard this parable found it hard on their ears. Surely someone who throws away the family inheritance doesn't deserve to be treated better than the one who is loyal and obedient!

Over the years I've had to do some struggling with this story myself, because in my family, I was the older brother. I was always the one who helped out and took care of things. My younger brother on the other hand was more rebellious. In my eyes, he got away with all sorts of things that I wouldn't have. I remember that from time to time I would get upset about it.

Who do you identify with in the story? The young son or the older son? Did they get what they deserved?

The interesting thing about this parable is that the real point to the story can be easily missed. The real point to the story has nothing to do with whether or not the sons got what they deserved. The real point to the story is that the father loved and cared for both his sons, regardless of what you think they deserved.

And Jesus is telling us that God is the same way. God loves and cares for all of us regardless of whether we deserve it or

not. Our relationship with God is not like a carefully calculated balance sheet. God loves us without measure. To the ears of Jesus' listeners this would be shocking. They were used to the Old Testament image of God. Indeed, some of us still today are not sure if it's a message we want to hear either.

But let's be clear about this. Jesus is not saying that our actions don't have consequences. After all, the young son did go hungry; and at the end of the story he still has nothing of his inheritance, while the older son has everything. Indeed, our behaviour always has its consequences, and we need to keep that before us all the time.

But the good news that Jesus tells us is that even when we make huge mistakes and suffer the consequences, God does not forsake us. God still loves us just the same - even if we feel we don't deserve it.

And this is a mysterious truth that permeates our lives. There is no particular reason why we deserve the life that we are given. There's no reason why we deserve food and shelter. There's no real reason why we deserve the family, friends, and community that surround us, support us and love us. There's no real reason why we deserve to be saved by a God who is willing to become like us and die for us in order to give us abundant and eternal life. It's very clear that we have done nothing to deserve all this.

And yet this is the love which God gives to us. This is the love of God that Jesus proclaims. Don't begin to think that you deserve it - none of us have done anything to deserve it - and yet it's given to us just the same.

Thanks be to God.

Lorne+



Sand and Stone

It's the story of two friends walking through the desert. In the midst of an argument one friend strikes the other. The friend who was struck takes a stick and writes in the sand..."Today my friend struck me."

They continue to walk on and come to an oasis where they take a swim. The friend who was struck gets stuck on the mud in the bottom of the pond and begins to drown... The friend who struck him pulls him to safety. The friend who was saved takes out a knife and carves into the rock - "today my friend saved my life."

The pair then continue to walk along, until the friend who struck and saved the life of the other asks. "Why when I hit you did you write it in the sand, but when I saved your life, you carved it in stone." The other friend replies - "when you struck me I wrote it in sand, where the winds of time will take it away, but when you saved my life, I wanted to remember it forever, so I carved it in stone."

Write your hurts in the sand and the things you want to treasure forever...carve them in stone... forgiveness will be necessary in your relationship.

As told to Terry Marklevitz, on the occasion of his son's wedding, by the Reverend Elaine Strawbridge

May Fayre

Countdown to May 1st! Please mark the date on your calendar for our 3rd annual May Fayre. It will be held at Central United Church who have graciously consented to having us use their facilities. Lots of parking off Huntingdon, back entrance to Forster Hall for the Flora Tea Room and the artists' display. Remember the Devon Cream Tea? It is being offered again this year for \$5, tickets to be ready for purchase in the coming weeks so Carol Boone and her fantastic Hospitality Committee can plan for needed supplies. Hope to see everyone there for a great day, 10 until 2. All funds to be put to the needs of construction this year.

Mary Lou Kingham
519-271-6798

A Contemplative Lent

The contemplative community within our parish continues to grow and practice, quietly. Gatherings have been established for Wednesday afternoons at 4:30 and Saturday mornings at 9:30. The Wednesday afternoon gathering is celebrating a decade of practice. A welcomed addition, for the community, has been the monthly Saturday late afternoon contemplative Eucharist. Attendance ebbs and flows with a core group maintaining the practice at each of the gatherings.

St James' is blessed to have Rev. Glenda Meakin as our contemplative practice director. Glenda is internationally recognized in the Worldwide Community for Christian Meditation.

We always welcome newcomers to contemplative prayer. Your practice requires very little equipment: a mantra and a timer. The mantra can't be purchased; it is a word or sentence that helps still the mind. The Christian meditation community promotes the use of *maranatha* as a mantra for your contemplative prayer. From the ancient language used by Jesus, this expression translates as *Come, Lord Jesus*.

Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer-phrase "Maranatha." Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently, but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything—spiritual or otherwise. Thoughts and images will likely come, but let them pass. Just keep returning your attention—with humility and simplicity—to saying your word in faith, from the beginning to the end of your meditation. ¹

Probably the most challenging part of establishing a contemplative prayer practice is the discipline of practising the mantra for 20-25 minutes, twice a day. When you consider that many television programmes are one hour long, it would seem relatively simple to find even less time than the standard T.V. programme to practice something as beneficial as stilling the mind and body to allow time to rest in the presence of God. Nevertheless, the discipline is a challenge to all; joining a group provides gentle encouragement.

At the recent Ash Wednesday services, we were reminded "to observe a Holy Lent by self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and by reading and meditating on the word of God." The Ash Wednesday

gospel encourages us "when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

The contemplative community at St James' encourages you to consider adding contemplative prayer to your Lenten observances. For more information, please check the contemplative page of the parish website (http://www.stjamesstratford.ca/St_James/ContemplativeSt.James.htm) or contact Nicola Adair (519.273.5327 or flylady1000@msn.com).

¹ excerpt from the WCCM website

Sing a New Song St. James' Choir Retreat

On Saturday, February 6th, the St. James' choir, along with some old friends, were treated to a lovely Choral Retreat at Central United Church. The day began with a gathering of the current choir, followed by a short morning prayer gathering led by the Ven. Lorne Mitchell. Then we had the distinct honour and pleasure of taking part in a choral workshop led by Ms. Barbara Collier. Lunch was provided, including treats from the choristers and York Street Kitchen, then Interim Director of Music Susan Nagtegaal led us in rehearsal to prepare some exciting material for the upcoming Easter season. Many thanks to the kind folks at Central United Church for providing to us their space, and to the choir executive – Jane Boyce, John Hindley, Susan Ellison and Terry Marklevitz – for organizing such a lovely day!



Wardens' Report

Your wardens are very buoyed by the results of the recent Vestry meeting's support of the decision to continue along the path of restoring our buildings to a usable place of Worship. Not only are these structures very conducive to our Worship they have proven to be functional and important to the Parish Community as well as the larger Community of the City of Stratford and Perth County. The further importance of this positive support allows us to continue to be responsible to our past parishioners who have charged us with the stewardship of the building, their financial legacies and the Memorial Gardens.

With the continued support of our parishioners, the committees and the volunteers, and ideally with further inputs and suggestions, we as wardens will not only earn your trust but will discharge our duties to and for the Community of St James'.

At the next Vestry meeting, following the 10 am service on March 21st, the discussion of the 2010 submitted budget will be imperative. It is anticipated that at that meeting a more exact cost of the immediate repairs will be available for further discussions.

See you there.

Walt Bathe
People's Warden

Holy Week and Easter Services 2010

Palm Sunday, March 28

8:30am St James' Church, Office Wing, Club Room
10:30 am Knights of Columbus, 93 Morgan Ave

Maundy Thursday, April 1

6:30 pm Traditional Seder meal, Knights of Columbus, 93 Morgan Ave
7:15 pm Maundy Thursday Service, Knights of Columbus, 93 Morgan Ave

Good Friday, April 2

10:30 am Knights of Columbus, 93 Morgan Ave

Holy Saturday, April 3

7:00 pm Easter Vigil, St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Ontario

Easter Sunday, April 4

8:30am St James' Church, Office Wing, Club Room
10:30 am Knights of Columbus, 93 Morgan Ave

Your stories and ideas are welcome additions to the St. James' Parishioner!
Please send your submissions to stjamesparishioner@gmail.com or submit them to the church office.

Feeding the Hungry: The Food Ministries of St. James'

The travellers on the road to Emmaus did not recognize Jesus even as he walked with them and spoke at length about what Moses and the prophets had said about the Messiah. It was not until he sat down with them at the table, took bread, broke and blessed it that their eyes were opened.

In the Old and New Testaments, the encounter with the grace and mystery of God is often associated with food or with people gathered for a meal, with the breaking and sharing of bread. We commemorate the saving act of Christ in the Eucharistic meal. Food, manna, bread signify basic sustenance of life, but beyond that they speak to the abundance of life that we have in God, as exemplified in Jesus' feeding of the multitudes, and that we are to share with one another.

Often in the stories and images in the Bible, as in our everyday lives, hospitality is offered and community is built and celebrated around meals. Paul wrote about the gatherings of the church as including a meal (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:17-33), which he admonished them to share more equally among them. Meals - soup lunches, pancake dinners, parish picnics, potluck suppers, and even the cookies and squares at coffee hour - have been a large part of how the people at St. James' and many other churches get to know each other and enjoy fellowship. Parishioners often take each other ready-made dinners in times of loss or serious illness.

The limitless love of God overflows into the church, and from the church into the world, and that has come to include the sharing of food with hungry. The food ministries of St. James' have become our most significant local outreach programs: Community Meals, the Food Bank and the Christmas Day Dinner. The contributions of food, money and volunteer labour from the parish - and from others in the community, too - are inspiring. And in addition to these three food ministries, many parish volunteers help with Meals on Wheels - Sandra Graff reported that 20 parishioners recently delivered meals in the same week as a Community Meal and the relocation of our 10:30 service!

That God expects us to feed the hungry is a recurring theme in the Bible. Isaiah wrote that part of the worship God requires is to "share your bread with the hungry" (Is. 58.7), and Jesus left no doubt that feeding the hungry is

one of the ways we are to love our neighbours (Mt. 25:31-46).

There is hunger even in the more prosperous areas of an affluent country such as ours, not with the overwhelming extent and deadliness as in the Global South, but it does severely diminish the capacity of many people to work, learn, stay healthy, maintain relationships and participate fully in the life of the society around them. It can have lasting effects on children. According to the Conference Board of Canada, in a comparison with 17 of the most developed countries, Canada ranked 15th with respect to poverty among working-age people, and 13th with respect to child poverty.¹ The need is shown by demand at food banks.

The Ontario Association of Food Banks does not publish statistics for Stratford by itself, but demand in 2009 was up 19% across Ontario and 32% in nearby London. 375,000 people in Ontario used food banks each month. Most were unemployed, 23% due to disabilities. For most, food banks are a help in a difficult time, not a way of life, as few had used them for long. 20% were employed, most part-time, and at minimum wage even full-time incomes are below the Low Income Cut-Off for families. For those on social assistance, benefits fall far below that level. Many clients lack adequate nutrition and have gone without health care such as dental, vision and medication.²

Statistics such as those were translated into close-to-home terms and illustrated with real-life stories in a report by the Perth County Social Research and Planning Council in 2006. It included the observation that "Faith-based services [are] essential to survival" for many living in poverty.³

St. James' provides Community Meals once a month from November to April. Usually 65-75 people are served, but at the recent February meal there were 106 guests. Thanks to food and cash donations by parishioners and bargain-alert shopping by the Coordinators, Community Meals requires only a modest subsidy from parish funds. It does take lots of volunteer support, over 20 people at each meal. Sheila Howard, Pam Ayres and Sandra Graff have shared the coordinator role in the past year. St. James' is

¹ "Report Card on Canada", Conference Board of Canada, September 2009

² "Ontario Hunger Report 2009: Living with Hunger", Ontario Association of Food Banks, December 2009

³ "The Hidden Face of Poverty in Perth County", Perth County Social Research and Planning Council, June 2006

one of thirteen local churches, as well as Northwestern Secondary School, that provide Community Meals on a coordinated schedule. Because of rising needs in the community, the coordinating committee has been working to increase the number of meals provided year-round.

The Christmas Day Dinner was started by Jan Mullock, who has coordinated it for all but one of the ten years since. A full turkey dinner is prepared by parish and community volunteers and served at noon on Christmas Day to as many as 80 guests. It is truly one of the most joy-filled places to be on a Christmas morning!

The Food Bank has been in operation for many years, and is open every Tuesday morning year-round. It is one of four independent food banks in Stratford, an unusual arrangement, as most cities have a single food bank that supplies outlets at neighbourhood locations such as churches. Our Food Bank serves between 60 and 70 people a month. Numbers have grown dramatically in the past year, and the clients' stories are similar to those in the OFAB report. Most are men and women who have lost their jobs and are awaiting government benefits. Some are single mothers, unemployed and without child care.

Chris Fisher was Coordinator for several years, and the role now has been taken over by David Meakin and Rick Falshaw. There is a team of nine dedicated volunteers who staff the weekly Food Banks, two at a time, and every week, David or Rick and a volunteer shop for groceries and package bulk and perishable items. Parishioners have generously supported the Food Bank with food and cash donations, and at times community groups have donated food as well. The Food Bank received a substantial contribution from CBC Christmas Carol in 2008 and a further contribution in 2009.

Of these three Food Ministries, the Food Bank requires by far the largest financial commitment. Over and above the donated food items, shopping for groceries requires around \$500 every month - about \$6,000 in a year!

Thankfully, cash donations have more than kept pace, and with the boost from CBC Christmas Carol in 2008 the fund at present has a surplus of about \$9,000. It seems in a strong position, but if needs in the community for food assistance continue to grow, there will be significant ongoing demands on funding not only for the Food Bank, but for Community Meals as well. Outreach Committee and Parish Council are looking ahead to maintaining a healthy Food Ministries Fund to support the Food Bank, Community Meals and Christmas Day Dinner.

From the Old Testament (Is. 49.10) to Revelation (7:16) the promised world to come is one where there is no more hunger. To bring that kingdom closer to fulfillment, we

must work, as the Five Marks of Mission say, "to transform unjust structures of society", for example, by advocating for changes to end the causes of hunger. In a number of places, soup kitchens and food banks have become places of community building with educational and mutual support programs, and activities to assist people in coping and changing their circumstances.

God loves us without limit or condition, and wants us to reflect that generous, self-sacrificing love in the world. One of the ways Jesus has taught us to do that is by feeding the hungry. Let us pray that when we share what we have, without judgment or expectation of anything in return, all eyes will be opened to Christ's presence, as they were that evening in Emmaus.

The Rev'd Tom Patterson

Building Restoration Committee Update

By Jeff Boyce
Chair, Building Restoration Committee

As the parish is well aware, events have unfolded rather quickly regarding the structural integrity of St. James, events that have been outlined both at a meeting held at Zion Lutheran January 31st and again at Vestry February 7th. Recognizing that it is difficult first for all members to attend such meetings and secondly to easily digest this cascade of change, the Building Restoration Committee provides the following **timeline**:

- ☑ February 2009. A gap was identified between the wall and the supporting beams on the north side of the nave. POW Peterman, a structural engineering firm specializing in evaluation of building integrity of older buildings (including 200 such evaluations of churches), was contacted.
- ☑ April 2009. Bob Peterman met with representatives from St. James' on site. Following this meeting a proposal was submitted by POW Peterman and accepted by Parish Council.
- ☑ September 2009. Bob Peterman performs a preliminary, visual inspection, noting that the upper walls in the central part of the nave are bowing outward.
- ☑ December 9, 2009. Peterman conducts detailed examination of the building integrity.

- ☑ December 21, 2009. Peterman's report is received by Wardens, outlining the seriousness of identified issues; together with his recommendation that occupancy of the nave be suspended as soon as possible.
- ☑ December 28, 2009. Peterman, together with colleague James Knight met with the Rector and church representatives to review in detail problems that were identified with foundation, walls, and roof support. (Photos of the areas of compromise to the structure are available on the St. James website homepage www.stjamesstratford.ca/St_James). A decision is made by Wardens on the strength of this meeting to close the main church building, effective January 10th, until walls are able to be stabilized.
- ☑ January 4, 2010. The Building Restoration Committee is struck and is comprised as follows: Chair Jeff Boyce, Rector Lorne Mitchell, Wardens Doug Ayres, Walter Bathe, Rick Falshaw, and Steve Monteith, Past-wardens Doug Thompson, Robert Parkinson, Jane Kirkpatrick, and Don Evans, Building and Property Chair Dave Sheldon, Past Building and Property Chair Richard Tribe, Custodian Larry Davis, Communications Committee Chair David Howard, and parishioners Terry Marklevitz, James Colbeck, and Michael Fox.
- ☑ January 7, 2010. Peterman performs a more extensive examination of the roof and walls of the Nave and Parish Hall.
- ☑ January 29, 2010. Peterman presents an updated opinion predicated on his January 7th inspection and computer analysis with the recommendation that the parish not use the upper parish hall.
- ☑ January 30, 2010. The Rector, Wardens and representatives from the Building Restoration Committee meet and agree to cancel services as of January 31st and subsequent services, scheduled for the parish hall, until repairs are completed.

The mandate / terms of reference for the Building Restoration Committee are as follows:

- ✓ To manage the stabilization project
- ✓ To prepare and issue tenders for a comprehensive study of the building's integrity as a whole
- ✓ To negotiate with engineers and contractors
- ✓ To create work schedules and cost outlines
- ✓ Oversee the restoration work
- ✓ To keep Vestry informed of actions / decisions of the Committee

- ✓ To liaise with fundraisers
- ✓ To manage finances of the restoration through a finance committee
- ✓ To consider, reflect, and respect the wishes expressed in recent survey results and upcoming town hall meetings.

Vestry Issues, Questions, and Concerns

A number of important areas were raised and explored as time allowed. The central themes raised for discussion are presented as follows:

- ☐ **Should we get a second opinion?** (vs. accepting the Peterman reports and recommendations) Taken into consideration were POW Peterman's credentials, experience, recommendations (at Diocesan and Parish levels), and references from church clients with similar concerns to those of St. James. Given the urgency of repairs needed and the scarcity of firms with similar credentials and experience, the committee opted to rely upon Peterman's evaluation and conclusions.
- ☐ **What was the motion passed by Vestry regarding financing?** Moved by Jeff Boyce, seconded by David Rose: *that the wardens be authorized to obtain bank financing in order to address the immediate repairs necessary to allow occupancy of the Church and parish hall, and that the Vestry approves that financing be secured with guarantees against the Endowment Fund. Carried.*
- ☐ **We have a contingency fund; so why do we need to borrow money to fund the restoration work?** A contingency fund of approximately \$200,000 is available. The scope of the immediate work (estimated to be in the range of \$200,000 to \$300,000) and existing commitments against this fund require that some monies will need to be financed from outside existing Church resources.
- ☐ **How much will all the work cost?** The range noted above is the estimated cost attached to stabilizing the nave and parish hall utilizing tie-rods (see photo illustrations on the website) and reinforcing structures to allow re-occupation of the building. Masonry work, re-roofing, and bell tower brick work are not included in this estimate.
- ☐ **How will we pay for this?** A capital campaign is envisioned. Funding from the Diocese, National Church, and Heritage Ontario will be pursued. Contingency funds may be utilized; with the preference of replenishing this fund with proceeds from a capital campaign.

Given the significant and pivotal nature of this project, the brief time available at Vestry to present content and facilitate understanding of both the details and the implications of the project, and the clear diversity of parishioner opinion and emotion, the Committee's view is that a more extensive discussion of the project on a parish-wide basis is required; and will be afforded at both upcoming town hall meetings and the scheduled continuation of Vestry, March 21st.

Recent Committee Activity, Summary

1. The committee has authorized the consultant to prepare drawings and documents for the stabilization of the nave and parish hall roofs.
2. The committee is investigating and will interview a select number of qualified contractors who do this type of work, based on a list supplied by the structural engineer.
3. The committee will be selecting one contractor based on a standard negotiation process outline by the structural engineer in order to get a construction price as quickly as possible and be prepared to proceed with the work as quickly as possible. No agreements will be made until the information is presented to vestry and its decision made.
4. In the meantime safety fencing will be installed as per the engineers' recommendations
5. At the same time the committee is proceeding with a comprehensive study for the long-range restoration and rehabilitation of the building. Areas to be investigated include mechanical and electrical systems, building component condition, stain glass windows, lightning protection in addition to the structural and environmental studies already completed. This study is intended to assist the parish in long-range planning and is not directly related to the emergency repairs now being considered.

The Building Restoration Committee will continue to do our utmost to provide relevant and timely updates on the work required. If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with any member of the committee.

We have an opportunity to use this problem to strengthen much more than just the physical structure of our parish.

Thank you for your support and understanding as we negotiate our way together.

An Introduction: **Rick Falshaw**

Editor's Note: After reading the Introduction to James Farmer in the Advent 2009 Parishioner, I decided the Parishioner is a great place to introduce our parishioners to each other. Rick Falshaw is Head of the Servers' Guild and St. James' new Deputy People's Warden. Many thanks to Rick for providing this contribution!

I was born in London, Ontario but lived for several years in Nova Scotia when my father was in the Royal Canadian Navy. I also lived in Hamilton for a time when Dad was transferred to the naval base there. We eventually moved back to London and I found my way to St. Mary's, where I live with my wife, Lynne. We have been married for 35 years.

I have worked at Hendrickson Spring since 1995, but was laid off in 2008. I have since found work at the Wine Rack. I enjoy the work and customers very much.

I guess you could say that we came to St. James' gradually. The church we attended in St. Mary's went to a contemporary form of worship, which included the music. We knew of St. James' and would attend from time to time when we wanted to hear beautiful, traditional church music. Gradually we started attending at Advent and Lent and finally we made the break with our old church.

Shortly after I was confirmed, I was invited to join the server's guild of St. Augustine of Canterbury Anglican Church in Hamilton. When my family returned to London, I continued serving at Bishop Cronyn Memorial Church. After several decades away from serving, I learned that St. James' has adult servers. Since I have always had a great love of serving, I joined the servers' guild. I love working with the clergy and young servers. To represent the people of St. James' is truly a great honour.

I have just been chosen as the Deputy People's Warden. This is a new experience for me and I am still, in many ways, getting used to things. Along with the Rector and other wardens, I represent the Corporation of St. James'. In addition, I am on the Parish Council, liaison with the Outreach Committee, and sit on the Building Restoration Committee. I will also be visible as the Duty Warden on Sunday mornings.

Some of my interests include reading, astronomy and cooking. I still play hockey and am hoping to build a model railroad soon.

Lynne and I enjoy life at St. James' and look forward to a bright future here.

The Five Marks of Mission A Focus for Lent

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

To teach, baptize and nurture new believers.

To respond to human need through
loving service.

To seek to transform unjust structures of society.

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the
life of the earth.

These 'Five Marks of Mission' were developed by the Anglican Consultative Council between 1981 and 1990. They have provided parishes and diocese throughout the worldwide Anglican Communion a practical and memorable "checklist" for mission activity. In our Diocese of Huron and other dioceses in the Canadian Church, there has been a renewed focus on the Five Marks, as we seek to be ever more intentional about moving forward as Christian faith communities.

The first mark, proclaiming the Good News, is really a summary of what *all* mission is about, because it is based on Jesus' own summary of his mission: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.* (Luke 4:18)

The Five Marks stress the *doing* of mission, of faithful action in Christ's name. The challenge, however, is not simply to *do* mission, but *to be a people of mission*. That is "we are learning to allow every dimension of church life to be a sign, foretaste and instrument of God's reign in Christ." (*Mission in a Broken World* ACC 1990)

An important characteristic of an Anglican is our belief that worship is central to our common life. But worship is not just something we do *alongside* our witness to the Good News: worship *itself* is a witness to the world, a sign that all of life is holy, and that hope and meaning can be found in offering ourselves to God. Although worship is not included as one of the Five Marks, it is a vital dimension to all faithful mission activity.

Our faith community of St. James is experiencing some unexpected and particularly stressful challenges this year. We can respond to these challenges with fear, anger and anxiety, or we can respond with hopeful energy, positive support and love. This can be an opportunity for growth, an opportunity to reflect and to learn more about ourselves as a Christian community, as those called to be builders of God's Kingdom here in this place, at this time. It is not a path we would have chosen, but it is our path.

As food for this journey, our Sunday preaching during the season of Lent will focus upon each of the Five Marks in turn. As we begin this Lenten season, we are reminded that this is not *our* journey, *our* mission. It all comes from God, and is going to God. "Mission is God's way of loving and saving the world." (Lambeth Conference 1998). May we, together, observe a holy Lent.

The Rev'd Lynn Mitchell

Transitions

By David Howard

When Gregor Samsa awoke from troubled dreams one morning, he found that he had been transformed, in his bed, into an enormous bug.

The Metamorphosis, Kafka

"Who are you?" asked the caterpillar. "I hardly know, just at present", replied Alice. "At least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then."

Alice In Wonderland, Carroll

Alice and the unfortunate Gregor share one thing: they are each the recipient of unwelcome and unexpected change – with all the attendant disorientation, demands for adjustment, paucity of ‘management guidelines’, and gamut of emotional response this might evoke.

As I sat in vestry and listened to the ebb and flow of conversation and opinion that surrounded recent events unfolding in St. James, I was struck by the intensity, diversity, and polarities of the views expressed; and equally, the capacity of sudden change to evoke in the individual, a characteristic stance likely representative of his or her unique ‘take’ on the vagaries of life itself – if that’s not too grand a proposition. Opinions ranging from the ‘save the building (at all – or nearly all – costs)’ to the ‘we are not bricks and mortar, we are community (wherever we might meet)’; and many stations in between. And so the first lesson of change: faced with crisis (or indeed, opportunity), what is one’s ‘typical’ response. Again, content aside, what do such changes as dislocation from one’s ‘comfortable pew’ teach us about ourselves? What are our attachments? Our fears?

There’s an old aphorism in my trade that goes something like: Neurosis is the logical result of applying old solutions to new problems. And its Karmic corollary: we will continue to be presented with variations on a theme (opportunities, if you will), until we get it right – think Bill Murray’s *Groundhog Day*. The second lesson: do we continue to do the ‘same old’ – with the same old result?

I think it’s fair to characterize the potential for a church’s roof to collapse in the face of nature’s next ‘design event’¹, the ensuing necessity of moving first into the adjoining spaces of upper and lower parish halls, and now rather unceremoniously split into a ‘two-point parish’ as the functional equivalent of tumbling down the rabbit hole.

The familiar touchstones of one’s customary pew and all the attendant trappings no longer exist. The comfortable routine of Sunday mornings (and a good deal else) is effectively ended. And as soothing as it might be to portray this as a ‘temporary inconvenience’, this may be at the very least naïve; at worst, a costly and unredeemable error in judgment.

As with most endings, a number of more or less predictable responses, emotional and psychological may and perhaps should occur. A process of *disengagement*² may have already begun for some of us; but for many, it’s early days. The urgency to ‘restore’ (witness the somewhat euphemistic moniker of the committee charged with examining options) is very strong. It represents a return to the familiar and with it, a reassurance that this is ‘just a bad dream’ and that, once awake, we’ll be back in Kansas again. Disengagement, an integral and necessary part of the process of transitioning, requires the courageous (and distinctly ‘non-neurotic’) acknowledgement that the old, the existing is forever altered, most likely no longer available. Once daddy is glimpsed placing the presents under the tree, Santa ceases to be. Clinging to his existence may serve some purpose for a time, nostalgic mostly – but the threshold has been crossed.

To return to Kafka, for those unfamiliar with this seminal morality tale, Gregor’s family (following his unfortunate ‘change’), initially horrified and embarrassed by his transformation, make efforts to soldier on. They take jobs and accept boarders to replace the lost income resulting from his inability to work (and to support the family as he had traditionally done); they care for their son/brother; they compensate for and rationalize his presence – until his unexpected entry deprives them of their last vestige of income. Only when the family is confronted with his demise – in rather too graphic terms, when they view the corpse – are they able to accept the reality that a large (and fiscal) burden has been removed from their lives; to acknowledge that they are ‘better off’ without their resident apparition; and to viably plan for the future. The Samsas had ‘disengaged’.

A second and equally inevitable aspect of transitioning, *disidentification*, describes the confusion and uncertainty that follows the removal of the familiar outer trappings, and with it the role-identity that comes with what was – but no longer is; the now sitting in plastic in the club room versus that familiar pew in the nave. In short, who am I once the old identity is removed and I find myself a displaced St. Jamesian sitting in a Knights of Columbus

Hall, having ashes imposed in Zion Lutheran. As with disengagement (the separation from the venue, the 'building'), disidentification, (the distancing from old identities) is every bit as essential to the transformative process.

And so on to *disenchantment*. And this is where things get really tough. A regular reading of Michael Valpy³ is all it takes – and for that matter, lame responses from the Bishop of Toronto don't much help ('proximity to death is an expected state for Anglicanism' – oh really!). A third aspect then to dealing with the 'endings' inherent in transition is a letting go (if that's not too clichéd) of treasured beliefs, cherished views, sentimental and idealized perspectives. To paraphrase William Bridges in *Transitions: To really change – not just switch positions – requires a realization that a significant part of one's reality is in one's head, not out there*. And further: *One needs to consider that the old view or belief may have been an enchantment cast in the past to keep one from seeing deeper into oneself. The disenchantment experience is the signal that the time has come to look below the surface of what was thought to be so* (p. 101).

The significance of a compromised roof on a building in Stratford has but drawn this particular congregation's attention to a 'situation', to put it mildly. To respond to this awareness with redoubled efforts to restore the status quo with 'time-honoured' interventions (read the 'same old solutions'), without first considering (again in clichéd terms) the 'big picture' or reading the 'writing on the wall' is at the very least reactive and perhaps even irresponsible. Valpy's article, which I would encourage all to read (and hopefully by the time this piece appears, will be available on our website), is but one in a growing series that have appeared over the past few years; all tracking the trajectory, together with credible explanations as to the 'why's', of church life in Canada. In sum, the data show clearly that the current generation of attendees is quite likely functionally the last for the church as we know it. This, no doubt, is about as 'disenchanting' an awareness as one might muster. And it is increasingly doubtful that a kiss from a passing prince will break this spell.

Disorientation – the final piece of the transitioning puzzle – begs the question of 'which way is up'; in short, how do we *reorient* and plan for the future. Historically, being disoriented, feeling lost, scared, and uncomfortable was an accepted part of change. Nobody welcomed it; most

endured it. Our modern ways lobby strongly against allowing the discomfort that disorientation drags along with it. Instead we bounce between unbounded (and unfounded) optimism (bless Norman Vincent what's his name) and tragic catastrophizing ('the end is nigh'). We do our level best to 'fix' what's making us unhappy – to make this 'bad state' go away as quickly as possible; or avoid even the thoughts of it. Disorientation is indeed the 'dark night of the soul' of transition, our existential crisis. And, if we've learned anything from the writers, thinkers, philosophers, we should have learned that we need to struggle through this stage, whether in the belly of a whale, engaged on a ten-year Odyssey, or hung on a cross. (Not surprising that I found myself thumbing through Psalm 22 the other morning.) Not just close our eyes and jump.

With endings come new beginnings. And perhaps some productive (maybe even helpful) ways of being in transition. Finding a regular time and place to be alone and reflect – imagine meditating one's way to insight and a little deeper understanding of self! Journalling, written reflection (I suppose that's what I'm doing as I craft this offering) may help clarify and focus thought, decision making. Simulating the journey, in individual terms, that the community is about to undertake. What does it feel like to be contemplating a project without clear fiscal parameters or defined utility, were it *my journey*? Taking one's time to facilitate fully informed, understood, thoughtful decision-making – a sentiment contentiously debated at vestry. Arranging temporary structures. Resisting acting for the sake of taking action – addressing pseudo-urgency. Identifying the 'real' source of discomfort – separating the worry around a compromised building from the deeper, visceral angst of setting off on a journey without having one's vehicle fully serviced and prepared. Talking – town-halling the process. And even more important, listening – hearing what's said. Exploring the 'other side' of change – if not the obvious or compelling path, then what? And taking care of self in all this process.

¹A sufficiently severe, natural event (heavy snowfall, ice storm, or sustained wind storm).

²Bridges, William, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. (Addison-Wesley, 1980).

³Valpy, M, "Anglican Church Facing the Threat of Extinction", *Globe and Mail*, Feb. 9, 2010.